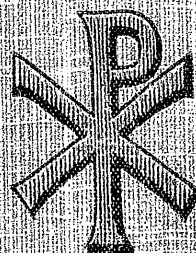


IDEALS OF MINISTRY



A. Wallace Williamson

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IDEALS OF MINISTRY



IDEALS OF MINISTRY

BY

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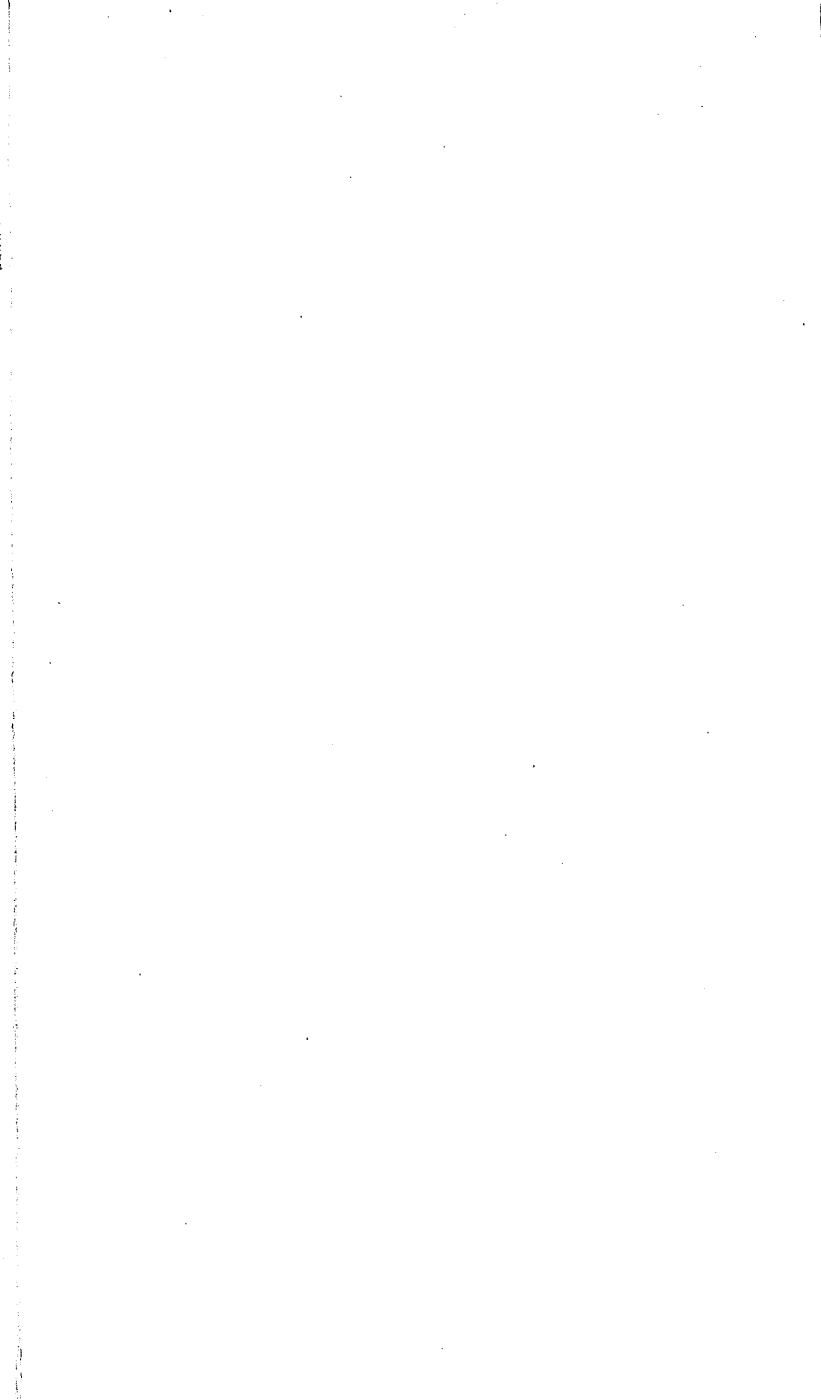
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IDEALS OF MINISTRY.

"Ut ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei."

WHEN it was proposed that I should undertake the work of which these chapters are in substance the result, an expression was used which weighed very considerably with me in deciding to accept the invitation. It was suggested that an opportunity would thus be offered of endeavouring to do something "to inspire our theological students with noble views of the work before them." Such an opportunity is certainly not to be put lightly aside, nor is the conscious inadequacy of one's own gifts and experience quite a sufficient justification for refusing the task. Poor indeed must that man's conception of his office be, and dull his spirit, who would not be moved by such a call, to speak for a little (though it be in a manner all imperfect) to those who are waiting for the work which he has himself at least tried to fulfil, to tell them something of his own sense of its greatness and nobility, and perhaps, from his experience of partial success and frequent failure, to convey to them some work-

ing principles and ideas which have been tested in experience, and may be found not unhelpful in the actual service of the ministry for which they are still preparing.

While the phrase which I have quoted supplied a motive that seemed irresistible, there was another in the same communication which indicated the subject, or at least limited and defined its scope within the comparatively wide domain of pastoral theology. I have accordingly not dealt in detail with certain important aspects of the pastoral office—visitation, organisation of parish work, guilds, classes, and schools. I have, however, included some notes on preaching, and in a closing chapter I have tried to gather into one the personal forces and relations which give reality and power to the whole work of the ministry.

Inasmuch as the Church exists on earth for a practical end, it cannot lightly regard the perfection of the means for the attainment of that end. For this reason the whole science of pastoral theology seems entitled to a high place in the preparation for the ministry. Throughout, in all its aspects—"homiletical, liturgical, catechetical, poimenical"—it deals with the equipment of the ministry for the fulfilment of its calling. The true pastor must preach. He must lead his people in the worship of God. He must build them up in the faith. He must seek those that are lost, and

**The pas-
tor's goal.**

try to bring in those who are outside the fold. In this varied work the science of pastoral theology calls to its aid all other departments of theological training, so that although it insists on the subordination of these to its main purpose, to the very end no amount of practical work will justify the pastor in the neglect of continuous study. In the actual work of the ministry, however, it is the fruit of these studies that should be seen. The pedantry of the theologian should be avoided by the pastor, not only in his work among the people, but in his preaching as well. To bring the minister into living touch with the people, and to help in giving him that balance of intellectual, moral, and spiritual training which will enable him to influence them to the utmost of his power,—this is the practical end of the science of the Christian pastorate. And to this end, as I have said, there is no royal road. Only along the path of strenuous toil and earnest prayer can the pastor's goal be found.

But it is a road that has been often traversed, and we can learn much from the successes and failures of those who, throughout the varied career of the Church, have fulfilled the sacred ministry of Christ. Not till our own century, perhaps, has an attempt been made to gather into systematic form the results of those great examples, and the definite teaching which from time to time has been given.

An oft-traversed road.

While it will ever be a chief source of impulse and encouragement to turn to the biographies of the great preachers and pastors of the Church in every age (and, indeed, no man who values his opportunity will fail to turn ever and anon to those fountains of inspiration, to drink in something of the spirit which moved them and made them a power), there is also real gain, alike in clear guidance and noble impulse, in tracing the history and development of the pastor's work and the rise of the pastoral science as it slowly emerges through the teaching and practice of the Church.

That science undoubtedly began with the Founder and Head of the Church, and nothing more clearly shows the great importance of the subject than the fact that the main body of His teaching may be included under the title "The Training of the Twelve." In the discourse spoken at the ordination of the apostles, and at the sending forth of the seventy, as well as in the closing discourses just before His departure, we may find the seed principles of all pastoral work. These, again, find an enthusiastic exponent in the Apostle Paul—not only through the splendid illustration which he gave of them by his own unparalleled labours, but also in those Epistles, teeming with practical wisdom, which unfold the glory and simplicity of the pastoral office. It was inevitable, as the Church grew and her

**Pastoral
theology
from the
beginning
of the
Church.**

organisation developed, that increasing attention should be paid to the sacred work of the ministry, inevitable also perhaps that its claims should be occasionally exaggerated, sometimes to the obscuring (if not to the total eclipse) of the spirit of the servant of Christ. But this is certainly not the dominant impression, when we read the works of the early Fathers which treat of the sacred office. Even the high claims of writers like Cyprian impress us above all, not with the personal importance, but with the awful responsibility and solemnity, of the pastor's office. The glowing eloquence of Chrysostom, in his treatise on the Priesthood, inspires a noble plea for the highest ideal of the ministry. In the centuries that followed the great orator, others of like zeal, if not equal eloquence, arose to plead for the right fulfilment of the lofty calling of the minister of Christ. Leo the Great lent the weight of his name to a treatise; while the Pastoral Rule of Gregory the Great, justly called "the most important book on the subject belonging to the ancient Church," was long enjoined on the clergy for constant use, and is still held in high honour. Up to the time of the Reformation the subject continued to occupy the attention of some of the best minds of the Church. Perhaps the most notable book of the intervening period is the tractate of Bernard of Clairvaux, characterised, like the books that preceded it, by a definite practical spirit and great

moral earnestness. When the Reformation actually came, it was naturally marked by a renewed study from the Reformed point of view of the duties of the pastoral office; and onward to the present day the subject has been unfolded from all sides of Church opinion and experience — sometimes narrowed to the work of preaching, at other times overbalanced by an undue treatment of liturgics, but on the whole so fully and fairly, from its various points of view, that it is inexcusable even for the most inexperienced to plead ignorance, at least, of the general principles of this indispensable science; so that, indeed, if books or lectures could achieve the result, a defective pastor and a poor preacher would be impossible.

Thus much I have said, however, not merely to show that the subject is one which deserves and demands from all “intending the ministry,” and from those actually in it, systematic and careful study, but also that the ministry itself, which we are called to exercise, is one which has a venerable history and great traditions. Though we are called to fulfil it under the conditions inevitable from our national history and position, it has not merely a local and national aim, nor is it to be guided by narrow and parochial ideas. It has its root in a divine institution, and its main principles are independent of place or time. It will therefore be fulfilled most

**Great
traditions
of the
ministry.**

successfully by endeavouring to rise to its great creative ideals, ignoring as far as possible those temporary expedients which are supposed to be necessary for adapting it, as the phrase goes, to the times, and which in our day are occasionally believed to be forced upon us by the exigencies of the Church, or the methods at present in vogue for the choice and settlement of her ministers.

Indeed it is in this thought that a living pastoral theology must take its rise. If our ministry is to be fruitful of any real and permanent good, if it is to be something more than a jejune and perfunctory performance of an unavoidable task, it must proceed on principles which shall take a real hold of our deepest convictions, and shall be the dominant guide of our work. For such principles there must be a definite basis in fact, otherwise our work will be in the air. For such a basis we must of course turn to the foundation of the ministry, to its real historical purpose and aim. In seeking practical guidance on these questions I do not propose to trespass on the domain of dogmatic theology, or even to venture into the thorny regions of ecclesiastical debate. It is obvious that any one dealing exhaustively with such a theme must perforce walk over the embers of unextinguished controversies, and even in the slightest treatment it would hardly be possible altogether to avoid the burning pavement. Yet it is surely not vain to hope that even from the blaze

and heat of age-long debate there may come a keener sense of the nobility of our holy calling, around whose claims and origin strife has so often raged, and a loftier conception of that spiritual Community whose oneness of life and doctrine that strife has so often served to obscure.

The intricacies of the debate as to Apostolic Succession do not, therefore, specially concern us here. The only practical question is as to the reality of the ministry, and the continuity of the sacred office from the time of its institution. Whatever doubt may attach to the channel through which it was intended by our Lord to be transmitted, it surely requires considerable hardihood in the face of historical facts, and the undoubted existence of the apostolic ministry from the Pentecostal period, to darken counsel as to the institution itself. In its broad principles at least the origin of the Christian ministry is not difficult to trace, and there is no community of Christians in the world which does not claim to hold that ministry in some sense from Christ Himself as the Head of the Church. Whether that claim can be established as a matter of fact in each case is a question not so easily settled, but the underlying principle, that the ministry derives its authority from Christ alone, has not been in set terms denied. Even in that quaint and homely body the Society of Friends, the call to minister

**Historical
reality and
continuity
of the
ministry.**

spiritual instruction is regarded as dependent entirely on the Spirit of Christ consciously received. In the general experience of the Church this purely subjective test has of course never been regarded as sufficient. And justly so, for however well it might be adapted to a small and earnest community, it is manifestly ill-fitted for the world-wide fellowship of the Church. It presents no safeguard against uninstructed zeal, and it opens a door to hypocrisy and charlatanism. Moreover, it has no historic basis. It suspends the Church, as it were, in mid-air. This has been recognised in all other Christian communions, even in those inclined to speak most slightly of the principle of ministerial succession; for the necessity of establishing a definite connection between the ministry and Christ has always been felt. Indeed unless this historical character of our religion be maintained, there would seem to be nothing left but a system of doctrine and morals, variable and adaptable, with no permanent basis, and susceptible of an indefinite evolution in which its original form might be entirely unrecognised. Platonism is not dependent for its proper exposition on a series of accredited ministers; for Platonism is a system of thought and nothing more. But Christianity is more than a system. It claims to be the life of a community. It is the expression of a supernatural life, which abides within a community of souls, which

has come into the world, and continues there, by a certain definite power—the power of the Incarnation. The ministry is bound up with this fact, is indeed a natural result of it; for we cannot realise the life of Christ without realising that the establishment of the ministry was an essential part of this work, without which, indeed, His work would be a mutilated and a meaningless fragment. Into the very core of His own earthly ministry enters the task of calling and preparing a ministry subject to Himself, who shall carry on and perpetuate the work for which He Himself entered upon the incarnate life. One main aim of His own personal ministry, as I have said, was the training of the twelve.

I need not say that this sense of the historic basis and continuance of a ministry has been held as distinctly within the Scottish Church as in any other branch of the Church catholic. Such ministerial succession she believes herself as a matter of fact to possess; and she regards it highly, not as a mere subject of antiquarian interest, but because it connects us directly with the apostolic Church, and establishes the reality of our commission as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been the teaching of the Church that the continuance of the ministry is given to those who have been already called thereto, because Christ our Lord has judged it meet that there should “be a succession of pastors

**The minis-
try of the
Scottish
Church.**

and teachers unto the end of the world." It is unnecessary, however, to dwell here upon this point. It will be admitted that the testimony of Christian history is overwhelmingly with us when we say that on almost any view of the Christian ministry (except the merely mercenary) noble and high service may be rendered. The legitimate divisions of High, Low, and Broad can each show a record of worthy and devoted pastoral service. One thing is certain, however, that hesitation between conflicting views will inevitably tend to weaken and paralyse any ministry. In this, as in other matters, the occupation commonly described as "sitting on the fence" is not exhilarating, nor does it conduce to enthusiasm, and it is perfectly evident from the nature of the case that it cannot even be comfortable. Every man who values his self-respect should avoid it and make sure where he stands.

I have not touched, then, on this side of the question, as to the origin and character of the Christian ministry, with any intention of dealing with it in detail. The view which I have taken of my present task is entirely practical, and I have therefore proceeded

**Practical
purpose of
the
present
discussion.**

on the assumption that what is expected of me is to offer within the limits assigned what help I can to the formation of a high ideal of the work of the holy ministry in those especially who are

looking forward to it, and to supply, as far as my own experience enables me, such stimulus to the carrying out of that ideal as may be helpful in the future. When I say this, however, let me not be misunderstood. Any word of advice which I may venture to offer in regard to the various departments of ministerial work will, I trust, be received as it is offered, in absolute sincerity, not as if I had any right to advise, but because I am attempting to give, wherever it seems serviceable, the results of my own experience. At the same time, let me say that although occasionally I shall take it upon me to offer advice, I am too vividly conscious of the immense variety of the work of the ministry to imagine that advice appropriate to one sphere can be suitable to all. What is wanted, indeed, is not disconnected advice on details, but some sound and clear principles which are capable of a wide application, apart altogether from the particular circumstances in which we may be placed.

It is, however, for this very reason that I begin by urging that we should endeavour to take from the first a definite and practical view of the ministry and its aims. The first thing to be done towards attaining true ideals of the ministry is to dismiss false ideals. A full and true view, indeed, it is the business of pastoral theology to supply. And it will grow more clear by closer

study and faithful performance of the manifold duties of the office. But apart from the clear conception which may be looked for from an exhaustive analysis, there are many false and impartial ideals which must at once be put aside.

If, for instance, the ministry be regarded as a means for scoring (so to speak) a personal success in the world, it is impossible to hope that the higher aspects of it will ever appeal to a man, nor is it likely that the true work of the ministry will ever in such circumstances be done. I well remember the shock of surprise with which early in my university life I heard a younger minister say of a distinguished divine, now passed away, "He is an excellent man for the Church, he is such a thorough man of the world." The remark was made in all seriousness, and no doubt there is worldly wisdom in it; but we cannot forget the elementary principles of our religion, and it is not by such means that the Evangel of Jesus has prevailed. A little worldly wisdom might easily have averted the tragedy on Calvary. The curse of the Church, and not its glory, lies in worldly ambition. No doubt, when there is behind the personal ambition a nature in itself sincere, great good may be done. And the general result of such a ministry may be less disappointing than that of another which proceeds on truer principles, but with less diligence and with less strenuous devotion. At the

same time, though this is undoubtedly true, it is undeniable that a ministry proceeding on such principles as I have supposed, and keeping before it as a primary aim the personal success of the individual minister, is vitiated from the first.

Again, it is easy to conceive an ideal of the ministry in which the intellectual aspect is allowed to bulk so largely as almost entirely to obscure its spiritual and devotional aims. **Intellectualism.** The business of the ministry is "the cure of souls." There are many paths by which souls go astray, and if they are to be reclaimed and healed we must examine for ourselves all the paths by which they may have wandered. We must diagnose the spiritual sickness from which they are suffering. We shall achieve little by seeking them along paths they have never trod, or prescribing remedies for ills they have never known. One remembers with sympathy the aged and mythical janitor who, after listening for half a century to learned lectures in defence of the faith, could still say with thankfulness that he believed in the existence of God; for under the appearance of good and earnest intellectual work there may be much misdirected energy, much utterly inappropriate and ill-balanced teaching, which will render a ministry largely ineffective. To keep before us a high intellectual ideal is a clamant necessity in our own day, and the minister who sets little store by serious and

hard study will soon weaken his influence and (as the phrase goes) run to seed. But this is a very different thing from the mistake of regarding our work as primarily and mainly intellectual. The ministry has a spiritual and an ethical aim, and all intellectual labour must be subservient to this end.

Of lower ideals of the ministry it should not be necessary to speak. Doubtless there are to be found instances in which the practical exercise of the work seems to proceed from no higher motive than the blunt worldly calculation involved in the conception of "a cure of souls" as *a living*,—a temptation to which, it may be said, with its limited material resources, the Church is not now greatly exposed. At every stage of the Church's life, however, circumstances conspire to make this a real danger. The idea of a benefice in which the chief recipient of benefits, and these entirely material, is the pastor of Christ's flock, is too obvious a travesty of the office to require serious treatment. It should hardly be necessary to say, Whatever ideals we dispense with, let us never part with that one without which all others will be vain, and always remember to do the work we are paid for.

The minis-try "a cure of souls." The ministry, then, is not a career in the worldly sense of the word. It is not an intellectual discipline. Still less is it a mere means of gaining a livelihood. It has a

definite and clear aim, which is nowhere better expressed than in the old phrase "a cure of souls." Its function is to deal with and supply as far as possible the spiritual needs of men, to bring them under the power of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, to mould the lives and characters of individuals, and to influence the whole community by promulgating the principles of the kingdom of God. In so far as the ministry succeeds in this, its proper work, so far does it attain its true end. But it is obvious that an ideal so high does not present a simple issue. The moment we begin to consider what is implied in the phrase, we begin also to see that the work involved must branch out in many directions. The varieties of human character, as well as the differences of environment, suggest a multitude of fields, in which, still acting in the same spirit, the earnest minister will have to vary his methods according to the apostolic principle, Being "all things to all men, that he may by all means save some."

Without forgetting that the central need of the soul is the same in all ages, the deliverance from the power and penalty of sin, we cannot overlook the fact that our own time presents peculiar difficulties. The complexity of modern life is not favourable to the spiritual message and service of the ministry. Intellectual difficulties of a new and serious kind, affecting the very

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foundations of belief, have to be met. And if they are to be met to any good purpose, it must be in an honest and sympathetic spirit, with as full knowledge as possible of the real matter in dispute. It is an impertinence to deal with such subjects at all unless one has done one's utmost to master the question in all its bearings. More harm is done by ignorant defence of the faith than by an honest admission of its difficulties; and indeed the greatest apologists have always taken this ground, even when pushing their forces into the camp of unbelief. To attempt to refute an error by neglecting to state it fairly, or slurring it over, is not only dishonest, it is futile. Again, the conditions of modern life tend to a practical materialism, which acts as a dead-weight on the work of the ministry. Intellectual materialism (if there be such a thing) will always be comparatively easy to deal with, but practical materialism, that absorption in the things of sense which comes as a special temptation in the higher ranks of life, and almost as a necessity in the lower, is a harder matter to face. Doubtless it is seen in its greatest strength in the crowded life of great cities, but even in the most idyllic of country parishes it is not unknown. It is this variety of demands made by the intellectual and social difficulties of our time which shows us the need for many-sidedness in any effective ministry.

And it is obvious that many other causes are at

work in the life of the present day which make the demands upon a real ministry increasingly varied and difficult. Moral issues are not so simple as they were wont to be. A physiological taint has fallen on much of our recent literature. Marriage in the minds of a section of the community has largely lost its sanctity. Light views of its importance are increasingly common. And the tendency to drift into pruriency is diligently encouraged by a multitude of devoted apostles.

How to save and help men beset by these and a thousand other, and perhaps stronger, temptations is the real problem of the ministry. And no man can look forward to it without misgiving, unless he believes that behind all the variety of the demands made upon it there is one clear purpose—a purpose for the attainment of which there are definite gifts available to those who will diligently use them. And it will be his endeavour to keep this purpose distinctly before him, to avoid the danger of losing sight of his main aim, and ever to form a clearer conception of the supreme ideal of ministerial work.

Now, such a conception can only be attained by going back, as I have said, to the root idea of the ministry, and thence to the root idea of the Church. Into these two far-reaching subjects I do not propose to attempt to enter here. I have tried to

look at the matter from our own point of view, as a

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branch of the Church of Christ appointed of God to minister in this land. It is the clear teaching of our Church that "no man ought to take upon him the office of a minister of the Word without a lawful calling." And further, that "every minister of the Word is to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer." For the efficacy and continuance of the ministry the Scottish Church yields to no branch of the Church in the importance which she attaches to ordination as "an essential element in the organisation of the Church of Christ." In the Second Book of Discipline it is described as the "separating and sanctifying of the person appointed by God and His Kirk, after he be well tried and found qualified." And though we disclaim all unfounded mechanical notions of ministerial grace, we do not depart from the position that this solemn admission to the office and work of the ministry, as it assumes on the one side a personal response to a real vocation, so on the other it implies a gift of grace equal to the demands of the call made upon us. Ordination, in fact, involves a call of God, and a response to that call. From the very first this was the method by which the ministry of the Church was chosen, and though there was a Judas among the Twelve, his failure to respond does not alter the fact of the reality of his vocation. "From his example downwards through the stream of history," as has

been powerfully said, "the ministry of the Church is a coast strewn with wrecks." But it is not at all certain that every failure is due to a man having received no vocation. It may rather be from failure truly to respond. At the ordination of the apostles Jesus called unto Himself "whom He would," yet the traitor was among them. The lesson from that typical example surely is, that we must not only make certain that we are really called to "this ministry," but also that we must in response give ourselves without reserve. I do not think the words are too strong to use which I quote in this connection, "Unless your after-life is to be wholly a mistake, you must in the last resort humbly yet firmly believe that you are being really called to this great work—that Almighty God has, so to say, 'in His love and mercy stooped down from heaven, and is really calling you with an altogether special vocation'; for it still remains true that 'no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.'"¹

Now I do not see that there should be to any honest man much difficulty in settling this point.

Vocation and personal response. The question put to us by the law of the Church suggests the method by which its reality may be tested. It is as follows: "Are not zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls, your great motives

¹ Randolph, 'The Threshold of the Sanctuary,' p. 4.

and chief inducements to enter into the functions of the holy ministry, and not worldly designs and interests?" If we can honestly answer such a question, if we really have within us a love for the souls for whom Christ died, and a simple desire to be the means of doing them good for Christ's sake, and of bringing them to a knowledge of God, and "to spend and be spent in the worship of God and the service of men," we may take these as certain signs of a true call. They are signs, at least, which justify any sincere man (taking into consideration his outward circumstances, and finding them in correspondence with the inward impulse) to regard them as indications that he is intended by God to devote himself to this special service.

God's call is a reality when it does come, but it is a dead letter unless there be a whole-hearted response. The want of this complete self-dedication has more than anything else to do with ministerial failure, and with the lowering of pastoral ideals. Merely to drift into the ministry with a fairly good intention, but without a conscious and energetic response of the will and a determination to honour the office by unstinted service, is to court defeat from the first. "No man," said St Bernard, "is certain that he is good who does not desire to be better; and where you begin to be unwilling to become better, there you begin to cease to be good." No man will ever be a good minister who does not earnestly strive to

be better ; when he ceases to be discontented with his attainments, he ceases even to exert the moderate influence he might. A true response to the call must be marked by humility, sincerity, and completeness. For it is God who calls us. We are to please Him even at the price of unpopularity, and we are to serve Him to the end.

The simplicity and directness of the words I am using may well be pardoned, for it is certain that we will do a thing which will be a source of weakness to us, perhaps throughout our entire ministry, if we leave the time of preparation behind us without personally facing this all-important question of self-dedication, which is really the secret of a true ministry. The supreme personal ideal of ministerial service is perfect self-surrender. Given this, all else will naturally follow.

But the ministry has never been, and can never properly be, a self-chosen work. The personal question is vital, and it is specially true of the minister, "if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." But not even the possession of the Spirit of Christ entitles a man to undertake this work. The minister must not only have a personal relation to Christ but also to His Church, in and for which he is called to serve. Historically it is certain that the ministers of Christ have ordinarily been ordained to their office by a constituted authority, consisting only of those who

**The minis-
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work.**

Twofold Relation of the Ministry 23

already possess the commission which they thus convey. In the particular case of our own branch of the Church they have also ordinarily been called by the people to exercise that commission within a definite sphere. They stand, therefore, in a twofold relation within the Church. They receive a commission of service and a call to use it. They are called out from the body, and while individually they are simply members of the same, officially they have laid upon them certain functions which are not common to the whole body, which are not delegated to them by the people but by the existing ministry, representing not itself but the Head of the Church, even our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not, as I have already said, propose to venture into the mazes of ecclesiastical debate on the origin and boundary of the true Church and the apostolic ministry; but I cannot pass on without protesting against an abuse of words, too common among us, which obscures the reality of the ministerial office. It is sometimes asserted that as ministers we are in no respect whatever authorised by God more than any other individual members of the Church. The statement is contrary to the express letter of all our authoritative documents. There is no branch of the Church which has been more jealous of unauthorised ministrations, and which has more carefully guarded from uncommissioned persons the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. She has

rightly resented assumptions of authority which are groundless, and pretensions to lord it over Christ's heritage, but she has never failed, and cannot in consistency with her position fail, to honour the true conception of the office as a delegated service from Christ, as bearing the stamp of His authority, and as the channel of His blessings. It is for this reason that I am anxious to concentrate attention on the fact that every ministry which claims not merely what is technically called "validity," but even historical reality, must seek to connect itself definitely with the apostolic commission, and therefore with the institution of Christ Himself. The root-idea of the ministry is the idea of delegated service in the name of the Head for the sake of the whole body, or, in the simpler words of St Paul, "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

But if this be the root-idea of the ministry, it is manifest that it is inseparable from the root-idea of the Church. At least it is impossible to understand the one apart from the other.

Relation of Church and ministry. A voluntary society which chooses its own officers can never be a true parallel to the Church; for however we may try to evade the difficulty by distinctions between the Church visible and the Church invisible, we have the same fact in each case to deal with. The union of which the Church visible or invisible is the expression is a union by means of spiritual gifts from a source beyond itself.

The Church does not create the life which it possesses. That life is present only through union to Christ. Metaphor is added to metaphor in Holy Scripture in order to bring out with the utmost clearness this characteristic of the Church's life; but they cannot be dismissed as mere metaphors. They are employed to express a real relation, and that relation is one in which the life of Christ is shared by His Church, and enjoyed according to the measure of their faithfulness by all the members. If the root-idea of the ministry be, as I have said, delegated service for the benefit of the whole body, the root-idea of the Church is united life in and through Christ.

Of this united life there must be an organ of expression, and thus we see the idea of the ministry as "delegated service for the benefit of the whole body" to be the fitting correlative of the idea of the Church as the body of Christ. The Church has certain functions in which all the members must share. At any given stage of its life many of its members may fail; but this fact cannot alter or lower the standard of the Church's life. If it has a divine indwelling, it has also a divine calling; and the measure of the one is the measure of the other. The command which accompanied the promise of Christ's perpetual presence can never be separated from that promise. Indeed the fact of Christ's presence with His Church, combined with the fact

that the Church is His body, determines very clearly the nature of the service which the Church must render here on earth. She is to be the representative of her Lord, and she is bound to represent Him in the fulness of His work.

These indications of the function of the Church given in Holy Scripture may readily be supplemented from our own Church Standards, which are particularly explicit in this matter—*e.g.*, “There shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will.” “Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by His presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto.” To worship God according to His will, and to seek to extend His kingdom, these two great aims sum up the duty of the Church on earth as called in Christ, as a fellowship constituted by common participation through faith of the gifts of His grace, as a body of which He is the Head and we are the members. To offer service to God in conscious and united acts of worship, and also in purity of life ever more and more approaching to the likeness of Christ, this is the function of the Church.

Indeed this is explicitly brought out in that high and practical view of the Church which we owe to St Peter and St John, where the body of Christian

believers is described as a priesthood. It is a curious, and not an uninteresting fact, that one of the main uses to which this beautiful and inspiring thought has been put, at least in the Reformed Church in certain periods of its history, has been to depreciate the correlative doctrine of the Christian ministry as the servants of the Christian priesthood for the fulfilment of their calling. Doubtless grave historical reasons can readily be adduced for regarding with suspicion any view of the ministry which would seem to separate it entirely from the veritable priesthood of all believers. But strong as these reasons are, they are not such as to justify the repudiation of a principle which has not only a clear Scriptural foundation, but is absolutely indispensable for the attainment of the end in view—the common action of the whole priesthood of the Church in divine worship and in the service of man. It is, then, for this supreme end that the ministry has been instituted, not to be “lords over God’s heritage” but to be the instruments through whom the united life of the body finds expression. In short, the ministry is the necessary complement of the idea of the Church.

The pastoral office in “Form of Church Government.”

For corroboration of this view let us turn to the “Form of Church Government,” where the scope of the pastoral office is very fully, if somewhat quaintly, laid down under seven heads:—

1. The pastor is to pray for and with his flock as the mouth of the people unto God.
2. To read the Scriptures publicly.
3. To feed the flock by preaching. (To catechise, a part of preaching.)
4. To dispense other divine mysteries: to administer the sacraments.
5. To bless the people from God.
6. To take care of the poor.
7. And he hath also a ruling power over the flock as a pastor.

These heads of pastoral duty present a high ideal, and they make great demands, but they are also associated with very high spiritual claims; for they are to be exercised with divine authority, and therefore with the assurance of divine blessing. Yet no other view of ministerial work has ever received authoritative sanction; for however low the practical standard in individual cases may fall, the ideal itself is high. Each of these seven heads would form a suitable subject of treatment, but for the sake of conciseness they may be grouped under three heads, and so the root conception of the Church is connected with that of the ministry; for as it is the ideal of the Church to represent Christ to the world in His prophetic, priestly, and kingly work, so is it especially the ideal of the ministry, as the organ of the Church's united life, to fulfil the same mission. It must be a ministry of the Word

to convert and edify, a ministry of worship by prayer and sacrament for fellowship with the Unseen, a ministry of life for guidance and direction. These three thoughts, "clear teaching, reverent worship, and devoted life, should sketch," as has been said, "the chart of our spiritual campaign."

Such, then, are the ideals of the ministry. Personal self-surrender to God; delegated service in the name of Christ; the ministry of the Word; the ministry of worship; the ministry of life. Each of these will be dealt with in detail in subsequent chapters. For the present let me add, no man will ever make much of the office of the ministry who does not cherish a very high ideal; and yet I cannot forget how much there always is, and especially in our day, to tempt a man to lower his flag. As soon as we leave college, where our studies have been carried peacefully forward in the academic quiet which is fitting, a change, unless we are peculiarly happy, will come over the spirit of our dream. The ideal world in which perhaps for years we have been living may be rudely shattered. We will be surrounded by a host of miserable temptations alien to the spirit of our work. The scramble for a parish, with all which that entails in the present day, the miseries of candidature, perhaps the weary waiting for work which we are burning to do,—these are the realities which tempt many men to let go the high purpose

**Ideals of
ministry.**

that dawned upon them in the years of preparation. Certainly there is "something rotten in the state of Denmark" when the way to immediate usefulness is hopelessly blocked for many who are eager for service. But we must take things as they are and make the best of them. It is certain, however, that the Church will lose a great source of power by having only one beaten track, and that a very narrow one, along which all must walk. The merest trifles will often hinder a man, capable of great things in the ministry, from getting even the opportunity of doing a little. It is all the more honourable in such men when the bitter experience of seeing their contemporaries, admittedly of inferior power, promoted to high place, leaves unaffected the sincerity of their character and the clearness of their purpose to work and wait, keeping the freshness of their early ideals.

But if the methods by which place is sometimes sought and gained be a danger in the ministry, so also is the attainment of our coveted parish. We will probably be praised for our worst work and blamed for our best; and instead of waiting patiently till the best is recognised in its true light, we may be tempted to settle down and give our people what they like instead of what they need. The perspective will be reversed, and we will regard the charge as a means of gaining

personal consideration, forgetting the first aim of the pastor—to give himself for his people. This is a temptation which besets many men, and against it we all have to fight. At first we enter on our duties with a keen sense of the work to be done. By-and-by that feeling passes, and the power of routine begins to threaten us. The habit of study is relaxed. Little duties are allowed to fill whole days. Outside interests bulk more and more largely, and a beginning is made which, unless checked, will certainly end, under the appearance it may be of absolute respectability, in a complete failure, a ministry barren of all real influence and devoid of any good result.

I do not know that, short of moral collapse, there could be anything more pitiful than such a case. God knows that even at the best our work will often be a sad failure; but the man who is content that it should be so, who deliberately allows his finer sense of the high calling to be blunted, is a traitor to his Master. One has heard men make a complaint which we have sometimes wished was within our power, that they had too little work to do, and undoubtedly for men of energy and force it is often a very depressing experience—there seems nothing to stir them to enthusiasm, and the response is cold. We shall not venture to say a word against such a wish, for it ill becomes a man to preach

where he is not called to practise. But there is a remedy even for such a complaint. It is to go back to the fountainhead of the Christian ministry, and to realise that although Christ often spoke to the multitude, His main work was with the individual. The Church, we repeat, lives to-day because He devoted Himself to the training of twelve. In modern times the historic case of Dr Chalmers is an illustration in point. Kilmany was too small for his energies when he was still in the full flow of intellectual strength, and also, as he afterwards felt, of intellectual pride. He was anxious to add to it five days of academic work, the remaining two being, as he thought, amply sufficient for the duties of the parish. It was very different when the true ideal of the ministry dawned upon him, when he realised his responsibility for the individual souls who had been placed under his charge.

Indeed, when it comes to the real business of the pastoral office, the real cure of souls, it is not a question of how little we can do to make a respectable appearance. We must "apply ourselves wholly to this one thing." And we shall be greatly helped towards this single-minded devotion to our work if from the outset we form a lofty conception of its real meaning,—if even now, as we look back at "the long line of saints and martyrs" who have adorned the ministry of Jesus Christ, our imagination is fired by the recollection, and in the thought

that by the sacred link of ordination we are to be joined to them, and so find our deepest and truest impulses quickened and stirred by their example.

There will open upon us, as we enter on our work, the infinite pathos of human life, "the deep sorrows and perplexities, the moral problems and strange questionings, the weird contrasts and terrible struggles," which meet us everywhere, in town or country, in lonely moorland parish or busy city. For the solution of these, even in a measure, we shall be driven back upon the only and sufficient source, the manifold gifts of the grace of God committed by Christ to His Church. And in the growing study of such problems we shall learn the width and variety of the ministry, not narrowing it to one field, but realising the greatness of its duties and responsibilities. We shall see that it is of the utmost necessity not to depreciate any part of ministerial duty, but to strive after each of its great ideals, knowing that each has its place to fill. If we realise the importance of worship and of the sacramental means of grace, that is surely no reason why we should disparage the preaching of the Word. On the other hand, a high sense of the value of the ministry of the Word should never be regarded as inconsistent with a true appreciation of other divinely appointed ordinances. And neither the one nor the other will be of much avail apart from the ministry of life, in which, as Christ's

servants, we show to our people in daily intercourse the reality of our preaching and the sincerity of our devotions.

To be an ideal minister one must be a true man, a true student of the divine life, and a true lover of men.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

“Non enim nosmetipsos prædicamus, sed Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.”

A TRUE idea of preaching is impossible unless it be regarded as a ministry of the Word of God. Taken up in any other spirit it is an impertinence, and in spite of all forms of outward success will most assuredly and deservedly prove a failure. The preacher is in a position markedly different from any other speaker. His aim should be, not merely to please, but to lead men to a certain view of life, or edify them if they have already adopted that view, to touch the conscience, to inform the heart, to direct the will. This is the duty inherent in his office as a minister of the Church of God. When he thinks of any lower purpose, such as winning the applause of men or enhancing his personal reputation, he has already lost strength and descended from his true position.

It is, then, of supreme importance in preparing for the work of the pulpit to remember this, that

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we preach only as ambassadors. We bring a message which is not our own. Although it is to be expounded and illustrated in words of our choosing, it is to be spoken for and in the name of God. As I know no other legitimate form of Christian preaching, so I intend to speak here of no other. Spurious substitutes are doubtless abundant, and modern preaching supplies perhaps more than its average of specimens. They are beacons of warning, however, not models for imitation. The work of the Christian preacher is to proclaim the Christian Gospel in all its fulness, and to apply it in its practical bearing for the salvation of men and for building them up in life and character, that they may have in them the mind which was in Christ Jesus, and that they may follow in His footsteps. Christ the Saviour, Christ the Teacher, Christ the Example,—that is the Christian preacher's theme.

A theme so definite and yet so transcendent determines at once with clearness the dignity of the preacher's work. Dignity is the first and most characteristic note of the Christian preacher. By this I do not mean a certain formalism of manner or assumption of a pulpit voice, which is only too common in the ministry. Nor do I mean the avoidance of the simplest, and at times even of the most familiar, manner and expression, as if dignity were only

compatible with flowing periods and sentences stiff with latinity. I mean rather that inevitable and irresistible dignity of thought and feeling which arises and exerts its influence quite unconsciously, when the preacher is able to forget himself and to allow his message to move and mould his utterance and style. It is such dignity as we feel to suffuse the Sermon on the Mount, and to flow from the Preacher there, because there is no evidence of conscious art or of an appeal to any lower motive than the very highest, because the Preacher means “first, midst, and without end,” only one thing, the spiritual benefit of the hearers. So long as the supreme object of preaching is kept strenuously in view, no preacher, however humble his gifts and furnishings, will fail in the first claim which his work makes upon him. In his mind and purpose he will honour his message, his hearers, and his Master.

Failure in preaching comes almost always from “beating about the bush.” Many a sermon falls

like a spent arrow, hits no target and achieves nothing. It is true that a bow

“Beating about the bush.”

at a venture may sometimes pierce the joints in the armour of a hardened sinner, but it is a mere chance for which the preacher has little to thank himself. True dignity, as well as power and influence, in preaching is often missed entirely from this very cause. Without falling into this

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error, let it be said very strongly at the outset, that unless we determine from the first to be guided by the one single desire of helping under God to save the souls committed to our charge, and of building them up in the knowledge of the faith for the strengthening of their spiritual character and the guidance of their daily life, we shall never really learn to preach at all. We may doubtless be able to produce sermons which many will admire, but they will lack entirely the one thing needful. They will probably be full of matter interesting to ourselves, devout and learned, it may be even eloquent and moving. But if they do not contain this essential element they will lack that which alone entitles them to be called Christian preaching. A true sermon must appeal to the conscience, and it must meet the soul's need with the message of God.

I say this—obvious as it is—with all the more emphasis and confidence, knowing the rocks and hidden dangers which meet us when we forget this guiding rule, knowing also the temptations which beset us to air all the little learning we possess. Not for a moment, of course, do I wish to imply that for profound thought and erudition there is no place in the ministry of the Word. Its place, however, is not the pulpit but the study. There it fulfils its true purpose in helping to clear our minds as to the real meaning of the text, and in putting into proper

perspective our views of Christian Doctrine. To bring it into the pulpit is simply to make a parade of learning, which, if our hearers are favourable, will lead them to say we are profound; if otherwise, that we are confused. Nor can it be denied that a well may be both muddy and deep. Whatever brings in the self-consciousness of the preacher must to that extent obscure his message, and necessarily militates against that dignity which should be characteristic of the Christian preacher as the ambassador of Christ.

I have used the word "dignity," though it is admittedly ambiguous, in order to lead back to its true source in preaching, and that is *reality*. We must not only appear to be in earnest, but we must really be so. Many men take a great deal of pains about their sermons, and it is very right they should. For if perfect literary expression and delivery enhance, as they do, the power of a living message, they are worthy of a man's painstaking care, but they are more than useless if a man has no real message to deliver. It has been said that some men prepare their sermons, others prepare themselves. Both disciplines are necessary, but the last is indispensable for true preaching. The Christian preacher must, above all things, be real and true. Through all the drapery of pious phrases the note of insincerity will be heard by the listening soul. It is particularly

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important to remember this in our early attempts at preaching, for there is such a thing as unconscious, as well as conscious, insincerity. Our words will lose none of their legitimate force if we evidently speak only out of that experience of life which we actually possess, instead of assuming an air of wisdom which sits a little uneasily on the brow of manifest youth. Thoughtful references in general terms to the sorrowful and perplexing side of human life will appeal far more powerfully to our people than the most vivid and harassing descriptions of human sorrows and trials of which it will be abundantly manifest by the very fact of our dwelling upon them in detail that we personally know little or nothing. Indeed it is a very safe and important guide in preaching never to try to rise higher than we have really attained; never to pretend, even for the sake of producing a good result, to have reached a height of spiritual experience which is, in reality, unknown. Preach what you know, or do not preach at all. This is the infallible rule, and whoso disobeys enters on a downward path which will ruin him intellectually and will also lead him into moral deterioration. Reality is impossible in preaching when a man thinks merely of what is expected to be said and attempts to say it accordingly. It can never be too often repeated that preaching differs markedly from all other forms of public speaking in this

respect, that while the orator in any other field of life may without undue blame speak to please the people or gain their applause, the preacher prostitutes his office and degrades himself when he allows such considerations to come between him and his real purpose. Artifices which seem to be venial with the secular orator are fatal with him. To tamper with truth is always dangerous, but never more so than in a minister of the Truth; and to pretend in delivering your high spiritual message that you have scaled heights which as yet are inaccessible, is to lose real influence and not to gain it. On the other hand, it is no less objectionable to pretend in a spirit of false humility not to know what we have really experienced. We are in the pulpit to testify of God's love in Jesus Christ. Our message must have a personal note, or it will fall hopelessly flat. This has ever been the secret of true preaching: "I saw and bear record." It continued with the apostles, "We testify what we have seen." It has been the supreme note in all the characteristic preaching of the Church in every age. It has marked the sermons of St Peter and St Paul, of St Augustine and St Chrysostom, of Bossuet and Massillon, of Luther and Chalmers. Subdued but ever breaking forth in volcanic force, the power of personal, individual experience of the reality of the religious life in the preacher's own soul—this has been an

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influence deeper, more searching, more abiding than any outward forms of oratory or of literary grace. And for this reason, because it alone brings home to the hearer that reality which should inform and underlie all preaching.

Another characteristic of the true ministry of the Word, arising naturally from what has gone before, is *simplicity*. Nowhere indeed is a **Simplicity.**

true simplicity more fitting, and more necessary, than in the pulpit. I say a true simplicity, for under the form of a somewhat vulgar familiarity it is not possible to recognise this genuine mark of a sincere preacher. Simplicity does not come as a necessary consequence of the want of preparation or a determination to talk down to our people. The simplicity of which I speak can only be the consequence of deep and earnest study. It comes from a firm, and so far complete, grasp of the subject; for it is ignorance and not knowledge that takes refuge in a multitude of words. In such a case language is used not to embody thought but the want of it. I do not speak of the genius who needs no preparation and to whom the fitting language comes without premeditation, for I do not know him; but for the ordinary preacher neither simplicity of language nor of manner will be attained without a patient and prolonged study of the great spiritual ideas and truths which it will be continually his duty

to expound. Simplicity can be the result only of clearness of thought, and clearness of thought implies the consumption of our own smoke. It implies a determination to get to the root of the matter on which we are to speak, and to present, not the process by which we reached it—unless and in so far as this is absolutely necessary—but the spiritual result itself, so that it shall be as clear and distinct in the mind of our hearers as it is in our own. Unless we attain this we fail.

Now this important element in preaching is not ordinarily to be gained without definite and continuous effort—it may be in many cases unconscious effort. No preaching can be of any avail unless it be “understood of the people.” It was because of this characteristic that our Lord met with such response, when “the common people heard him gladly.” To be constantly putting our thoughts *en rapport* with our people is the secret of true success in reaching and influencing them. And for this reason we should be on our guard against the use of terms which are simple enough in themselves, but have perhaps no meaning, or an entirely different meaning, to them. For instance, one uses with freedom the expression “human society,” or the single word “society,” meaning the common life of the race, till it becomes clear that one is supposed to be aiming at the foibles of what is technically known as “society.” Then it is

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high time to change the phrase. It is not necessary, however, to go into detail in these matters. Rather let us see from what principle underlying the very idea of preaching these three prime characteristics arise. This has been already indicated in the description of the preacher as an ambassador. All preaching is, and must be, a message from God. "For purposes of His own," says Bishop Ingram, "and for reasons we cannot presume to fathom, He saw fit to make a preaching ministry His instrument for the salvation of the world. It is at once a comforting and yet an awful thought. It is comforting because it is not we who presume to take on ourselves to do it. 'How shall they preach except they be sent?' On the other hand, it is an awful thought that we are ambassadors for God, that we have to receive the message first and understand it, and then deliver it clearly to the people as though God did beseech them by us to be reconciled to Him. To be brought so close into the life of the Godhead, and given so direct a share in working out God's purpose in the world, is enough, is it not, to make us ascend the pulpit-steps with awe to the latest day of our ministerial life?"¹

The ministry of preaching, then, has the three notes of *dignity*, *reality*, and *simplicity*, because its *substance* involves all three. It is a ministry of the

¹ Work in Great Cities, p. 98.

Word of God. And the Word applied to the cure of souls is in its essence simple, clear, and divine. A Continental writer on pastoral theology (Sailer) says that the fundamental quality of good preaching must be sought in a thorough grasp on the part of the preacher of the essence of Christianity—such a grasp of it as will enable him to see in the special truths this central essence, and in the central essence the special truths. “This central idea,” he continues, “cannot be a complex idea. It must be the same that was in the mind of Christ, and from Christ passed to St John, to St Paul, and to all the Apostles and the outstanding preachers of Christianity. This central idea may be more or less clear, but the preacher’s duty will be to give it ever new freshness and beauty. It is—

The sub-
stance of
preaching.

Dieu en Jésus Christ
Salut du monde pécheur.”¹

Such a central idea is indeed an essential qualification of the preacher. Without it he will talk at random and ultimately arrive at an imaginary Christianity, finding no end in wandering mazes lost. With it he will be, to a large extent, independent of rules. When the general has a clear view of the whole field he can arrange his forces ; otherwise it would be impossible. So the preacher with a definite grasp of the central thought of Christianity

¹ *Théologie Pastorale*, vol. i. p. 342.

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will be able to arrange and dispose its subsidiary thoughts and principles with a view to its one purpose. He will choose his theme because it discovers a certain side of that supreme truth which he deems to be specially needful for his people. And in his choice he will be guided by a consideration of the spirit of the Christian message, of the strength and weakness of his hearers, of the purpose of his ministry, and of any special circumstances of the time and place in which he is called to preach. In whatever form he may ultimately group the great outlines of his teaching, without such grouping, centralised under one comprehensive idea, preaching must necessarily be ineffective. It will be so much scattered and disconnected speech aiming at no grand unifying purpose, and however brilliant in detail, meaningless and uninteresting as a whole, a series of flashes but no steady abiding light.

It may not be amiss at this stage to give the parallel themes of doctrine and morals under which

The field of the preacher's work. Sailer groups the great outstanding truths of thought and life evolved from the central idea of Christianity, and forming together the field of the preacher's work. Whatever variations and modifications may be made upon them, it is impossible to set its main features aside and remain a Christian preacher. (1) There is the doctrine of God—supreme truth, love, beauty; the life eternal with the corresponding duty of faith,

hope, and love towards Him the Source of all good.

(2) The doctrine of man, originally pure, stained with sin, and now again capable of restoration, with the call to return, and the assurance of complete reunion with God. (3) Then the doctrine of Christ,

Son of God and Redeemer of men, the only Mediator between God and man, with the consequent duty of faith, trust, and love towards Him.

(4) The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of new life to the soul, dwelling in God's children, and moving them to all good, with the duty to pray for the Spirit, to listen to His voice, to follow His guidance, and to co-operate with Him. (5) The

doctrine of the Church, the whole company of the children of the Father through Christ His Son, in the Holy Spirit, with its commission to preach, worship, and administer God's ordinances, and the corresponding duty of realising the fellowship of the Church, entering heart and soul into its worship, and practising self-sacrifice for the good of others.

(6) The manifestation of God in nature, the Bible, and human history, with the duty of seeking Him and honouring Him by imitating His love. And

(7) finally, The doctrine of divine Providence, of eternal justice and love, of death, judgment, retribution and the fulness of all things, with the duty of laying hold on eternal life, so that we may triumph over the troubles of time and the temptations of this passing world, as well as over the fear of death.

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The central subject of all preaching must be those fundamental truths of Christianity, with the duties, hopes, and aspirations which depend on them; and if so, it is manifest that many themes ought to be banished from the Christian pulpit. Sailer enumerates thirty. In our day he might have increased his list. But the rule with which he closes is applicable to-day no less than in his. "In short, the preacher ought to speak of nothing of which, after serious study, it seems to him that in his place neither Jesus Christ, St Peter, nor St Paul would have spoken."

The substance of Christian preaching, then, is the Christian Gospel, and the aim of the preacher must be (1) to instil the principles of that Gospel into his hearers, (2) to fill up the outlines of their spiritual knowledge, and (3) to enforce the practical bearing of every part of it, so that their Christian knowledge may be a real power in their lives.

These considerations must guide us in the choice of subjects. This is perhaps one of the greatest difficulties in the practical work of the ministry; and there is no formal remedy which can quite meet it. The temptation in young preachers is to deal with great problems, to follow some line of speculation which academic study has made familiar, or to tackle some subtle or paradoxical principle which may strike by its statement, but probably bewilders

by its treatment. To avoid this danger, it is necessary to keep one's mind open always in general study and in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and to preserve a careful note of suggestive thoughts and texts as they occur. A well-known theological writer, who is also one of the most interesting expository preachers, Dr Marcus Dods, shows indirectly that a great deal of his own thoroughness in the work of preparation is due to this habit. "Do not scorn, then," he says, "to keep a pen-and-ink memory, and set down at once the texts that occur to you and the subject they preach to you in the words coined by the first impression. If you allot to each suggestive text the two pages of a note-book as it opens, and if you add from time to time what your reading or observation contributes to the elucidation or amplification or illustration of the subject, you will sometimes find, to your great joy, a sermon almost ready made."¹

This is a useful plan for storing material, but there must also be some principle to guide us in the choice of subjects from Sunday to Sunday. To get into ruts is always dangerous, and destructive of living influence, not to say of interest. The Christian year, in this connection, presents itself to some as a practical and most helpful guide. It supplies a

The
Christian
year.

¹ Erasmus and other Essays, p. 326.

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basis and reason for returning to fundamental truths; nor is it easy to suggest a better. Whatever difficulty may be felt in some minds as to the connection between certain dates and the actual events or doctrines therewith associated, the system of the Christian year has at least this undeniable advantage—it compels us to think, in regular rotation, of the great cardinal truths of the faith: in Advent, the coming of our Lord; at Christmas-tide, the Incarnation; before Easter, the sufferings, temptation, and death of our Lord; at Easter, the Resurrection, then the Ascension and the ministry of the Holy Ghost; and through the long season following the varied aspects of the Christian life, its duties and needs. Of course I am assuming that the Christian year, although in itself a mere ecclesiastical arrangement, is regarded as having beneath it the sound basis of central facts which constitute the faith of the Church. To pretend to follow the Christian year, and ignore these facts, is to descend to a form of empty ritualism which is at once contemptible and absurd. And yet one is not without experience of such a thing, as, for instance, when an Easter service—bright and appropriate in every way, hymns, prayers, and lessons all bearing on the great fact of the Risen Life—is followed by a sermon which is a veiled attack on the reality of the resurrection. Such a treatment of the Christian year, it is needless to say, is unworthy.

Another important help in the choice of subjects is the adoption of short courses of sermons, either explicitly announced to our people or arranged upon a plan in our own minds.

Courses of systematic preaching.

Indeed it is sometimes better not to announce beforehand, but merely to use the plan as a guide for oneself. This method prevents us from returning upon well-worn themes, and helps us to preserve the proportion of faith. If it is our duty to declare "the whole counsel of God," we can hardly do so by the method of detached sermons. Unconsciously the people feel—though each sermon may in itself be helpful—that there is a want of continuity, that they are not learning the first principles and going "on unto perfection." For many special reasons we may be compelled to break in upon our plan, but these interruptions will serve to emphasise the continuity of our teaching, and need not be out of harmony with it. The supreme benefit of such a system is the saving of time in that bane of ministerial life, the choice of a subject. Probably it is no exaggeration to say, that with a good many preachers more time is lost every week in the aimless search for a text than would suffice for the production of the sermon. There seems no special reason why one text should be preferred to another. One rises before us for a moment and looks attractive. We expend some labour on it, then put it aside, only

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to take up another with similar results. Thus time is wasted, the brain is wearied, and any will-energy we possessed is gradually frittered away, till, as Saturday evening comes alarmingly near, we make a desperate plunge for something, hurriedly write it up, and, thankful that we have not utterly failed, make a solemn resolution—to be hopelessly forgotten—that this will never occur again. From such harassing experience there is only one way of escape. It is to have a definite plan carefully prepared beforehand, and to keep up a steady course of reading and study along the lines of our plan. This will deliver us from bewilderment as to our subject. It will also be much more effective in the long-run with our people. For our message will gradually impress itself upon their minds, and will remain there, because it has been consistently presented. Bishop Dupanloup, in his excellent book on the ‘Ministry of Preaching,’ points out admirably the great value and importance of such systematic preaching. “See,” he says, “what a difference there will be in consequence, after a ministry of four or five years, between a” preacher “who has never preached any but vague and disconnected sermons on detached subjects, and one who during this time has gone through a solid and complete course of religion, preparing each one of his instructions with care. The first will have learned nothing, absolutely nothing, but

to arrange his phrases. The second will have gone through the whole of the great Christian teaching, and with attention, reflection, and with that intimate acquaintance with these subjects which was absolutely needed in order to understand and appropriate them, to make them his own, to translate them into popular language, to be in a condition to explain them properly to his hearers.”¹

The expedient of the Christian year and the rational conception of a plan of spiritual instruction

Special and occasional sermons. and guidance—these are clearly two most useful and helpful guides. Another important aid is to keep in constant touch with our people. None of us can hope for real success in the delivery of the pastoral message if we keep ourselves outside of the actualities of life. I do not mean specially to recommend the practice of preaching what are known as “topical” sermons, which undoubtedly have a legitimate place in the pulpit. A time of national calamity or rejoicing, some special visitation to which the district has been subjected, these certainly call for treatment which need not be sensational, and may be useful. But I am thinking more of particular spiritual or moral difficulties which will be suggested to us in conversation with our people, or some obvious moral weakness which infests the neighbourhood, or it may be some acute experience in our own

¹ The Ministry of Preaching, p. 73.

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life. These are occasions which should be used, and if well used, they add a human touch which is eminently helpful in bringing us near our people, and deepening that sense of sympathy which is a great source of power. In preaching, we should endeavour always to make them feel that we are, in a sense, "the heart of our parish"—rejoicing "with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep."

These three suggestions, obvious as they are, will do a great deal towards giving variety and interest to our preaching. Indeed, if they are faithfully followed, they ought to dispose for ever of nine-tenths of the hesitation which mars our work, weakens our influence, and sometimes almost drives us to despair.

The choice of subject, again, will be greatly facilitated by considering the various kinds of **Kinds of preaching.** In one of the innumerable recent books on the subject, I find a detailed description of thirty different styles of sermons, which we are told should all be studied and employed, with the encouraging remark that there is "no excuse for the most illiterate preacher following any rut." The principle of division employed to produce the thirty kinds is somewhat artificial, as will be seen from the fact that it includes "hypothetical, hyperbolical, dogmatical, oratorical," &c.,—a principle which gives as many

different kinds of preaching as there are texts within the covers of the Bible. This, of course, is absurd; but still more absurd is the humdrum method of always attempting to preach a quasi-oratorical discourse, and perpetually beating the drum-ecclesiastic to the same monotonous tune. There is surely a natural variety which will suggest itself to any living preacher who is endeavouring to exercise the ministry of the Word in the pastoral spirit—regarding himself not as a mere pulpiteer, but as a minister of Christ, and fulfilling through his preaching a part of his ministry. Indeed the craving for excitement in preaching may seriously weaken the pastoral character of the preacher. The congregation will become an audience instead of a flock—possibly at times greatly gratified, but not steadily moved to moral and spiritual improvement; whereas, if the preaching of the Word be carried out in the truly pastoral spirit, with a definite knowledge of our people and of their needs, it will vary according to a natural and sensible order. It will at times be almost purely hortatory; at other times mainly instructive; again devotional or meditative, dogmatic or ethical. The mere preacher who does not follow up his preaching by pastoral care will miss much of his influence, and if he does not seek to know his people he will lose much of his power. I am speaking, of course, of the stated ministry of the Word. I am not speaking

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of the occasional office of the preacher which may be, by the mere fact of its strangeness, as well as by its strength and vigour, a source of great and deep influence. I am speaking of the normal work of the preacher among the people who know him, and whom he should know. I am regarding his work as one has been compelled to regard it during actual service, as an outflowing of the pastoral relationship—a mission, a calling to arouse, to instruct, to feed, to edify, to rebuke; a mission inherent in the office of the ministry, and evoked by the pastor's personal knowledge of the needs of his flock. Such a preacher will not preach to gain applause, but in all cases and in every way to do his people good.

Now in order to do our people good the message must be appropriate to their needs, and these will suggest the true variety of treatment. Out of the multitude of divisions, seven distinct forms of the ministry of the Word may be indicated. Three at least of these appear in the regular curriculum of study—the Sermon, the Homily, the Lecture. Then may follow—the Instruction, the Apology, the Bible-reading, the Meditation.¹

Unfortunately all preaching is frequently regarded as sermonising, and it may, and often does, become

¹ I am indebted for the suggestion and some details of this seven-fold division to an interesting paper by Professor Cooper of Glasgow University.

more or less a routine matter. The sermon is, of course, the supreme type of the ministry of the Word. It is peculiarly the set or prepared speech for God, distinct from all other forms, yet varying greatly within its own limits. The ideal of the sermon is, that it be ordered in the arrangement of its topics, balanced in the proportion of its parts and the method of their treatment, clear in its expression so that its meaning will be evident to all, and commended to their liking by every grace which, in consistency with the truth of the doctrine and befitting the message, the preacher can supply. It is, and ought to be in the truest sense, a work of art, constructed in the form most fitted "to conciliate, to instruct, to persuade," moving by definite stages towards its one purpose, and driving that purpose home by an accumulation of all the forces at command. This is unquestionably of the essence of the sermon. We must not fall into the error of putting too much into it. It is not a mere heap of information, however true, or a mere collection of counsels, however useful. It is a speech directed to a single end: to force home a truth, perhaps in its glorious richness and manifold bearings, but still as a single principle, or to urge some single rule of life, whether in one or many of its applications. One thing at a time; one thing of real importance to the spiritual wellbeing of the hearers, to make them Christians

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or to make them better Christians,—that is the proper idea and method of the sermon. It is for the preacher to make it as worthy as he can to be used by God.

But there is a place for other forms in the ministry of the Word. For a great assembly, and on **The** a solemn occasion such as the weekly **homily.** service in every parish, the sermon is the right thing. But there is, or should be, in the parish, at least a second service. And there are certainly less formal gatherings where what is wanted is rather a conversational than a set discourse, a quiet, earnest, serious talk for God, and for the things of God. This is the form of the homily. A homily is a “talk,” but it need not be a disconnected talk. Only in form does it differ from the sermon, not as regards either its matter or its object, but in order that pastor and people may come nearer to each other. The divine pattern of the homily is the discourse on the way to Emmaus, when He talked with them by the way and opened to them the Scriptures. It is a form which will never pass from use in a truly pastoral ministry.

The third form of the ministry of the Word is the lecture, of ancient use in the Church and still **The** required from students of divinity as one of **lecture.** the exercises. Unfortunately it has in many quarters been discredited; but this is due not to its inherent unsuitableness, but often, it must be

admitted, to want of preparation and concentration on the part of the minister. The lecture is intended to deal with a comparatively large portion of Scripture, and expounders who have not taken sufficient pains are apt to lose themselves in details. When "persecuted in one city," they take refuge in another, and so give the people a series of detached observations on single verses which cease to have much interest, and tend rather to darken than illuminate the sacred page. Another reason why the lecture fell into disuse is the fact that it was combined with the sermon at the same service, and so became a burden truly grievous to be borne. There is no reason, however, why it should not be eminently useful if carefully carried out. Where there are two regular services, the discourse at one of them should be a lecture: it will bear fruit in a well-instructed people. But it must never be conducted with slovenliness. And while explaining briefly necessary details, it should endeavour to seize the outstanding principles of the passage. Two centuries ago this form of the ministry of the Word was strongly recommended by the saintliest of Scottish churchmen, Archbishop Leighton, and it was no doubt in large measure owing to its general use that our Scottish people knew their Bible as they did. For models of this kind of work I know nothing better than Frederick Robertson's Lectures on Corinthians and Dr Dale's Lectures on Ephesians.

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The instruction, or catechising, is primarily for the younger members of the flock. It has its **Cate-
chising.** authority, a very high one, in the command of Christ—"teaching whatsoever I have commanded." Its aim is to give practical direction as well as doctrinal information, the doctrine itself being imparted with a view to obedience in faith and love. Its method implies (1) progress—we must lead our hearers from one truth to another, from one law of the Christian life to a second and a third; and (2) examination, for we must see that they are taking in our teaching.

Quite a distinct form of the ministry of the Word is what is called in France the conference, a method **The con-
ference.** of preaching to those who, so far from being of one mind with the preacher, are, or think themselves, radically opposed to him,—who are opposed indeed to the Gospel which he is set to preach. Owing to the popularity of atheistic and infidel views, the French clergy have had recourse to this form of preaching in order to meet, and if possible win to Christ, those who will not come to the ordinary services of the Church. The sermon, among Christians and as addressed to Christians, is naturally preached amid the sanctities of public worship; it is founded on some text which all admit to be part of the Word of God; it is listened to by the Christian congregation as the responsible utterance of an accredited ambassador

of Christ. The conference, or apologetic discourse, is addressed to those who are not prepared to join in Christian worship or to allow any special authority to Scripture, still less to admit the commission of the preacher. Therefore the preacher lays aside for the moment his claim to be received as in any sense the messenger of God, and presents himself simply as one who has made experiment of the Gospel and believes it. He appeals not now to the inspiration but to the manifest truth of the Gospel, and states the case for Christ on its merits. Our Lord's discourses with the Jews were on many occasions of this kind, and St Paul's daily disputations in Ephesus, in the school of Tyrannus, must have been similar. It has been pointed out that the conference has survived among us, or at least that it has a sort of mummified counterpart in the Latin thesis which still, I believe, haunts our divinity halls. It was probably originally prescribed to students with a view to fit them in after life for a kind of apologetic preaching; but it was heretics, rather than infidels, whom they were expected to meet. Infidelity has not yet attained such proportions among us as in France, but there are many who are affected by its negations and prepossessed by its plausibilities against the faith, the morals, and the ordinances of Christ. It is clear that, if not already called for, some such form of preaching as the conference thrown out by the

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Church of France will require to be developed among us. To see this form in perfection we must turn to the conferences of Lacordaire. The work has in somewhat different form been admirably accomplished in several series of apologetic lectures which have appeared in recent years.

Undoubtedly in the ordinary work of the ministry there is a place for apologetic preaching, but there is no call for putting it always in apologetic form. Many difficulties vanish when a truth of religion is clearly stated, but one should avoid suggesting difficulties which have never occurred; and when an objection to the faith is stated, it ought to be met with equal clearness or let alone.

Turning from the conference, we come to two simpler, but no less useful, forms of this ministry—
The Bible-reading. the Bible-reading and the meditation. The Bible-reading is a practical application of Biblical theology. It may be used generally, but it is especially applicable to those who have (through previous neglect or otherwise) grown up in ignorance of the various truths, ordinances, and duties of our religion. The Bible-reading is one of the best modern additions to the methods of the mission preacher. Our older revivalists were too often content to leave their converts just where their conversion left them, as if, after conversion, they needed nothing more. They forgot the necessity of instructing their converts in the way of God more

perfectly, and of building them up in their most holy faith. The Bible-reading aims at doing this. It is indeed an old method with a new name, for Christ showed the example by expounding in all the Scripture things concerning Himself, and St Paul alleged passage after passage to the Jews to show that Jesus was the Christ.

The last form of the ministry of the Word is the meditation; and though the name may be strange to many of us the thing itself is not, for we had it till lately in the communion addresses, which, however, were often intolerably long, and largely lost the devotional spirit. Such devotional meditations, when rightly rendered, have a real place in the life of the Church and of the individual soul. It is not merely that we require to be brought into an appropriate frame of mind when drawing near to the Lord's table, but also, if we hold a real faith in the great verities of our religion, that we should from time to time seek to enter and to take our people into their deeper meanings, to behold spiritually the mysteries of Godhead—as His incarnation, His temptation, His agony, His cross and passion, His resurrection and ascension—to look for His coming again, or to unite with cherubim and seraphim in adoration of the Trinity. On themes like these it is true that sermons are needed, but we need more than sermons. At times—say on Christmas day and still

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more on Good Friday—the finished sermon, the eloquent oration, is often felt to be out of place, all the more unsuitable because it is eloquent. These are times rather for adoration than for much speaking. The deepest spiritual truths are not subjects for rhetoric. They unveil their treasures to those who devoutly meditate upon them. While we are musing the fire burns. The preacher who would lead his hearers into such holy ground—and every preacher ought to lead them thither—will find no method better for his purpose than that form of the preaching of the Word known as the meditation. There are many models for the meditation in the old devotional writers. After reading of the Word and prayer, the preacher, not looking at the congregation, but even by his attitude showing that he, too, is turning his mental gaze in the direction he suggests to them, bids them “place themselves in the presence of God.” Then, after a short pause, he will begin by calling up before their mind one after another of the facts of the mystery which is to be before them. Thus those who have been won for Christ by the sermon or the conference, built up by the lecture, the homily, the Bible-reading, are admitted by the meditation to the holiest of all, feed upon Divine truth, and come closer to the realities of the faith than is possible in any other way.

I have enumerated these seven forms of ordinary ministry, and I have done so because I think there

is room and need for every one of them, not in our large towns alone, but in many a country parish. There will often be special need also for evangelistic or mission preaching, in which the direct aim is to awake and arouse those who do not deny but who have lapsed from the faith. The true ideal of the ministry of the Word is not a perpetual round of disconnected sermons, prepared perhaps for any audience or for no audience at all, but a preaching of the Word in such a form and with such variety as shall meet all the needs of our people. Such a ministry may not be brilliant or great, but it will be living, real, and practical; it will (so to speak) mean business, and it will achieve business.

The variety of preaching indicates the need for variety in style. The meditation and the sermon

Style. will naturally differ greatly. Each form will suggest its own appropriate clothing.

As to style of composition and delivery in the general work of preaching, what I have said in the early part of this chapter will, to some extent, apply here. The prime object of preaching is not display of power, but to affect the character and life of those to whom we speak. Above all, it must be clear, dignified, and simple. To gain such a style we must keep in constant touch with some, at least, of the great treasures of our English literature. I think the heavy and lumbering style of much of our theological literature stands greatly in

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the way of good preaching. Our learned German theologians are perhaps mostly to blame in this respect. It would be well if those of us who have for purposes of study to steep ourselves in German lore would, as a counteractive, turn to the great French preachers—Bossuet, Massillon, Fénelon. That crisp and lucid style which is peculiarly the gift of the French is invaluable in preaching.

But any great author who has lived because of his power will serve to keep the mind in tone and brace the style. Only we should know him and love him—as Dante did his Virgil,—conning him over and over. The greatest of our orators have not despised such aids. Burke, it is said, always kept a ragged Virgil at his side; and Homer, we know, was the inspiration of the statesman and orator of our time who rose near to his high level. Every man will choose in these matters for himself. It should not be necessary, however, to say that the preacher who neglects the great model which lies to his hand in the English Bible will miss the chief source of a pure and noble style. Two of the most notable men of our day, John Bright and John Ruskin, attributed their command of the English tongue to the knowledge early instilled into them of the language and images of the Bible.

More important even for the actual result of our preaching is the style in which we speak our message to the people. It is a plain necessity,

after we have done all else, that we should be heard; for failing in this we fail in every-
Delivery. thing. Small, therefore, as it seems, it is a great thing to attend to the use of the voice, and to endeavour from the first to attain a clear utterance. Cicero says that the "voice should be clear and sweet." It is not given to all to attain both qualities, but a man whose main business is to speak must learn to make himself heard.

Another vexed question I may touch on. I think we have carried the custom of preaching with paper to excess. And though I am quite certain it would be dangerous in any man to give up writing—Cicero himself said the pen was the only teacher of speech—I am quite as certain, from my experience of both ways of it, that every preacher should at least cultivate the habit of speaking without notes. No doubt there are great examples of preachers who invariably used their MSS., notably Chalmers and Liddon. These are exceptional cases; but as long as the MS. is between us and the people there is a barrier, an obstacle to free communication, which must weaken our influence. The habit of preaching without notes will give us naturalness, freedom, weight, and will deliver us from many stupid mannerisms. The truest form of preaching is undoubtedly that in which a man speaks directly to men.

Let me add only this last word: the work of preaching is the greatest work a man can under-

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take. Let us not be tempted to think lightly of it, or to imagine whatever fluency we may acquire that we can dispense with continuous study. Let us consider highly this ministry, and resolve, when we enter on it, to devote ourselves to it with ardour; to give the people our very best; not to minimise, but magnify the office, and to apply ourselves to this great service with all our power. The prime requisites of good preaching are a thorough knowledge of the Christian religion in all its bearings, a real love of souls, and an intense preparation of our message. To such preaching there will always be a ready response.

THE MINISTRY OF WORSHIP.

"Quid ergo est? Orabo spiritu, orabo et mente."

THE ministry of worship stands supreme in its own domain, not to be compared or contrasted with the ministry of preaching—each occupying a place which cannot properly be usurped by the other. As it is our duty to prepare ourselves by all possible means to be true preachers of the Word, it is no less our duty to take the utmost pains, in rendering the Divine Service, to make it as effective as it is within our power to do for its two great ends—the glory of God and the service of man. Teachers of truth we must be, exponents of devotion we must also be; and the one duty, just as much as the other, demands patient and strenuous study. Perhaps, indeed, in the peculiar circumstances of the Church, and in the somewhat chaotic condition of common worship among us, it will be found in most cases very necessary to devote special attention to the requirements of the divine service, alike in its order, its substance, and the spiritual disposition appropriate to its rendering.

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Unquestionably the subject of the ministry of worship is beset with difficulties—is apt, indeed, to open up many points of controversy which remain as yet unsettled. Still, for the serious practical work of the ministry it is desirable not to give to these questions undue importance, but rather to concentrate attention on the fundamental ideas of divine worship as distinct from the work of preaching. It is manifest that the attitude of the congregation should be entirely different during these actions. Unfortunately it is not always so, for the critical spirit is often dominant during prayer, doubtless to the destruction in large measure of the devotional spirit. But it is plainly a loss of spiritual influence, a loss which must therefore be guarded against when such is the case. The essence of worship lies in the offering to God of a spiritual sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise—"the fruit of lips which give thanks unto His name." The ideal attitude of the individual worshipper, and of the united congregation, is that of absorbing contemplation of the glory and majesty of the eternal Father, through Christ the Son, in the power of His Holy Spirit. Public worship does not, therefore, merely mean worship in public. It is Common Worship; it is the worship of a congregation of Christ's Church. To create and foster the devotional feeling which shall unconsciously take this attitude in divine

The idea
of common
worship.

service is the great duty to which, in the ministry of public worship, we have to set ourselves. And for this purpose we must realise that there is more to be done than merely to acquire a capacity for conducting the devotional service with such readiness and fluency as will gain, perhaps, the praise of superficial hearers, but will do little to create real worshippers and to edify them in the body of Christ.

It is, then, a prime necessity for the right rendering of public worship that the idea and purpose of such worship should be firmly and distinctly grasped. One looks back with something approaching horror, after experience and study have taught us better things, to the crude and self-conscious rhapsodies which did duty for what should have been well-considered and clearly-arranged devotions in which our people might intelligently join, accepting them as the fitting expression of their own desires and aspirations. For this mistake, into which many fall (and unhappily perhaps never realise their error), there is only one remedy. We must proceed upon a definite principle. We must ourselves be clear, else we cannot expect clearness in our people. We must remember that public worship is absolutely distinct from private devotion, and that what is becoming and proper in the one may be entirely inappropriate in the other. Indefinite meditation

Lucidity
in wor-
ship.

does not fittingly form part of public prayer, though from the lips of a devout and gifted soul such meditation may be helpful and edifying to many. But in order to attain common worship in any real sense, there must be pervading the worship coherent ideas which shall meet the necessities of the worshippers, and find in all an intelligent response. Lucidity is therefore the first requisite in a rightly rendered service of common worship. This implies and demands careful premeditation. Schleiermacher speaks not a whit too strongly when he says, in reference to this, "Faith in the inspiration of the moment is a vain presumption."

But premeditation must itself be guided by a principle. It is difficult, indeed, to see how worship can be conducted otherwise; and yet, as a matter of fact, it must be confessed that it often is, and probably neither unacceptably nor altogether without edification. Lately I noted an obviously sincere and devout man, who has long served in the ministry, declaring that to sing more than four times in the service of the Church was a custom fraught with danger. Upon what principle he decided that four was a safe number and five dangerous, he did not explain; but his statement is typical of a confusion not uncommon. It is the idea that we may choose our own way, that we may conduct worship after any arbitrary fashion

Need of
a right
principle
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elements
of worship.

according to our individual whim. The question is not at all a question whether we should sing less or more, but whether the great united act of common worship has or has not a definite purpose to achieve, which can only fittingly be attained by a variety of exercises, each fulfilling or expressing one or other of the elements which unitedly constitute the act itself. In regard, for example, to the number of times it is proper to sing, it is obvious that there must first of all be found a reason why we should sing at all. In the Directory of Public Worship there is no certain indication that we should sing more than once, the second psalm being only suggested "if with conveniency it may be done." For many years, under the influence of Zwingli, the sound of united praise was unheard in the Church of Zurich. The practical question then is, upon what principle should the rendering of public worship proceed, and how are we to co-ordinate the various acts to which we are accustomed—prayers, lessons, psalms, or hymns of praise?

One so-called principle is to let everything turn on the subject of the sermon, and to make lessons, hymns, and prayers revolve round the coming idea, the people throughout the service being engaged (at least in their sub-consciousness) in wondering what it is to be, and vainly endeavouring to solve the interesting conundrum. Another "principle"

on which it is possible to proceed is that of making the service "interesting," or, as it is sometimes called, "attractive." In the true sense of the word nothing could be more fitting. But the attraction must be legitimate; it must arise from the inner meaning and power of the service, and not merely from that which is entirely extraneous and foreign to its real purpose. There is no spiritual attractiveness in anything but spiritual truth, and all other forms of attraction, in so far as they are inconsistent with truth or hinder its access to the soul, are to be avoided. For indeed the first principle of common worship looks not to the means of drawing the worshipper and providing edification for him. It is an act of approach to God.

It behoves us therefore, in the first place, to form a clear conception of what is involved in such an approach. We start from the assumption that it is possible—for this, in the Christian Church, more clearly than any other principle, is emphatically laid down—not only for the individual, but for the body of believers. Here, again, we touch on the fundamental truth of the incarnation, for it is through the union thus effected between our nature and the divine that the approach to God the Father becomes a certainty of Christian experience. And it is not merely a vague sense of some kind of unseen influence moving us to higher thoughts. It is a direct and deliberate action, a definite attempt on

the part of Christian people united for this common end, to rise into the nearer presence of God.

Now the very first requirement of corporate worship is a common understanding on the part of all, either of the words to be used or at least of the ideas to be expressed. This necessitates a certain formal character in all public worship which cannot be avoided.

Need of a
common
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shippers.

It may appear in the unalterable terms of liturgical forms, or it may express itself according to individual characteristics; but in the freest as well as the most rigid system, it cannot be entirely absent. Nor is it desirable that it should be so. For while all rightly rendered worship should be suffused with the light of ardent conviction and deep personal sympathy, it will fail in its main purpose if the personal, individual element become dominant. For it will so far fail to give full expression to common needs, or at least to gain a conscious recognition on the part of the worshippers that such needs have been uttered. To avoid this danger, it is necessary always to retain in the public services of the sanctuary the clear sense of a definite relation of responsibility in which, as ministers, we stand to represent and be the "mouth of the people unto God." Though our words must be directed to God alone, this must ever be with the full purpose of carrying our people with us in mind and heart before the throne. This

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will compel us to present them in such a form as will most naturally lead the thoughts of the worshippers, step by step, into the very innermost shrine, the holy of holies of spiritual devotion.

Hence arises the necessity for order in the divine service, which again implies a consistent **Order in worship.** distribution of the elements of worship and the fitting use of these elements in definite acts of devotion. This suggests at once the vexed question of "liturgy or no liturgy," on which it may be well to say a word in passing. Frankly, I must say that the question seems to me, in large measure, a matter of indifference, except in so far as response of some kind would seem to be natural to the soul. At least, it is greatly a question of devotional custom; and it is certain that devout souls have worshipped and will continue to worship God under either form with unfailing comfort and edification. The commonplaces of the argument for and against a fixed form of service are too well known to require full statement here, but it may not be inappropriate briefly to recall them. The obvious advantage to the worshippers of knowing beforehand what prayers are to be offered; the greater facility a liturgy affords for unanimity in worship; the continuity of the service through the living ages of the Church—a practical exposition of the communion of saints; the fact that the worshipper is not at the

mercy of the individual minister; the general dignity and reverence of liturgical expression; the truly catholic spirit thus engendered; the certainty that no abiding want shall be left unexpressed; the security the Church possesses that the worship of God shall be rendered in all fulness, that the evangelical verities shall not be ignored or sublimated, that the faith of Christ shall be continuously presented in a form more likely to mould the life of the worshipper than the formal and abstract statements of theological confessions,—these are the main considerations which justify the use of a fixed liturgical form. It not only makes clear to the worshippers at every stage the various parts of the divine service, but it links them in a holy chain of devotion with the past and the future, and it also forms a continuous method of spiritual and devotional teaching. And yet, even when all this is admitted, there is no sufficient justification for a liturgy which does not submit to periodic revision or addition. The spirit of devotion surely does not lie dormant within the Church for hundreds of years, contributing nothing which may enrich her stores. Here indeed lies an obvious weakness in the fixed liturgy, and here clearly the custom of free prayer may claim superiority. Other advantages are obvious, and have been frequently urged. The tendency to formalism may be checked; greater freshness and vivacity may characterise the

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service; the special needs of the time can be freely expressed, whether of joy or sorrow; the "gift of prayer" may more readily be cultivated.

It was reasons such as these, no doubt, which weighed with the framers of the Directory in discarding the liturgy and adopting free prayer as the rule in the Church. But while the liturgy was discarded, there was no absolute departure from the idea underlying its use, for the principle of a common form was upheld. Though it was contended that the liturgy had been "a means to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, which contented itself with set forms made to their hands by others, without putting forth themselves to exercise the gifts of prayer with which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all His servants whom He calls to that office," the remedy was not sought in a simple mandate to each minister to conduct the service as he chose, and to pray, as it is called, "at large," but rather by an instruction providing for "the general heads, the sense and scope of the prayers and other parts of public worship being known to all," so that there might be "a consent of all the Churches in those things that contain the substance of the service and worship of God," and that the ministers, by taking heed to themselves and the flock of God committed to them, might be careful to furnish "heart and tongue with further or other materials of prayer and

exhortation as shall be needful upon all occasions." It would hardly be possible, without actually reaching it, to approach nearer to the ideal order which would combine with a fixed form or forms—expressing the essential elements of the Church's worship, unchanged and unchangeable—freedom on the part of the individual minister to use such additional prayers as from day to day seem to him necessary to express fully the needs of his people, or to turn to spiritual edification events or teaching arising in the varying circumstances of life. This, however, is not a practical question here, and need not be further discussed. What is of importance to note is, that whether with or without liturgy "the general heads, the sense and scope of the prayers and other parts of public worship," should be "known to all." The reason for this injunction would scarcely appear to stand in need of enforcement, and yet it is amazing to think how generally it has been, at certain periods, disregarded. The hopes entertained in the Preface to the Directory, that there might be "a consent of all the Churches," have scarcely been fulfilled. Indeed they failed from the first in their design to embrace the three kingdoms; and the dreary devotional history of the eighteenth century shows that they failed even here, for they were invaded by a spirit alien in large measure to true devotion.

The Directory, however, remains, notwithstanding

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its "significant omissions and calculated ambiguities,"¹ an authoritative guide; and though it is not, as far as I know, literally obeyed in any single parish throughout the Church, there is sufficient indication within the scope of its injunctions as to the ordinary Lord's Day service of the elements which should enter into the rendering of that service:—

1. That public worship is to begin with prayer for pardon, assistance, and acceptance.

2. That holy Scripture (ordinarily one chapter from Old and New Testament at each meeting) be read in order (large use of the Psalter being also commended).

3. That a psalm shall be sung in connection (apparently) with the reading of the Word.

4. That exposition of the Word shall be deferred till the chapter be read.

5. That the prayer before sermon shall express, in addition to the confession of sin, the universal needs of humanity, and may culminate (according to the discretion of the minister) in a prayer of thanksgiving (which may also follow the sermon).

6. That a sermon be preached.

7. That a prayer of thanksgiving, and for the continuance of the Gospel and the acceptance of the "spiritual sacrifice" offered in worship, be said.

¹ See Dr Leishman's valuable chapter on the "Ritual of the Church" in 'The Church of Scotland, Past and Present,' vol. v. p. 381.

8. That the Lord's Prayer be used in the prayers of the Church.

9. That the minister shall dismiss the congregation with a solemn blessing.

Now it would perhaps be hard to find a case in which the requirements of the Directory are followed to their minutest detail, and custom in these matters seems to be even stronger than enactment. For custom has departed on every side from the lines laid down. It has introduced additional matter; it has omitted some points deemed of importance; it has extended largely the service of praise, which was left so bare and joyless; it has perhaps improved here, and injured there; and in many cases it has merely taken individual whim as the guide, discarding any authority whatever. Still, notwithstanding the liberties which have been taken with it, the Directory presents to us substantially, especially when read in the light of its history, the essential elements of the public worship of the Church: (1) The actual approach to God, involving confession of sin and prayer for pardon; (2) the conscious communion with God through His Word and Spirit; (3) the intercession and thanksgiving in that communion and fellowship for the whole body of believers, and for the propagation of the Gospel and extension of the Kingdom of Christ to all nations.

We have here three great spiritual ideas of which

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every service must be a fulfilment—(1) access, (2) communion, (3) intercession. In the expression of these spiritual ideas, which together constitute what we call worship, we are to be guided by the instructions of the Directory; but we may also learn much from the models offered in historical Church services, and by living and growing Christian experience. As we refuse to believe that the present spontaneous expression of spiritual desires should have no place in the Church, so also we refuse to regard as a sealed book the treasures of devotion which have come down to us from the best ages of the Church. We should think it a failure in duty to ourselves and our people not to draw water out of those wells which have refreshed so many souls in ages gone, and out of which so much may be brought that is for use and comfort to-day. At the same time, all such use of the devotions of the past must be according to reason and with a true sense of fitness and reverence. Not for quaintness of phrase or mere archaic charm were it desirable to choose such gems of spiritual utterance to enrich a service otherwise bare and restrained, but solely for their spiritual value, for their searching and uplifting power, for the quality of divine calm which seems almost to abide in the words.

In order to use aright such stores of devotion as lie within our reach, it is necessary not merely to be

able to select what for various reasons may be acceptable, but to understand the value and appropriateness of what is thus used in its own proper setting. And for this reason not only the reading but the comparative study of the liturgies of the Church universal, as well as of the memorable books of Christian devotion, seems to me a duty which none of us can afford to neglect. The intricacies of liturgiology doubtless open up too wide a field for the busy pastor, unless his tastes draw him specially in that direction; but a general knowledge of the outlines of the subject is not difficult to acquire, and would largely contribute to an intelligent grasp of fundamental principles and also to an intelligent use of an almost boundless store of devotional material. Beginning, for instance, with our own Directory, we would go back to the reformed Book of Common Order which it supplanted, and then to the various forms of the Prayer-book through its gradual process of revision. From these to the service-books before the Reformation—the sources of the Prayer-book—and so out into the open stream of devotional life which in different channels flows through the course of the Church's history. Only thus can we fit ourselves to appreciate the treasures within our reach, and to choose with knowledge and sympathy such parts of devotional literature as may fitly be used or adapted for our own freer and more elastic services.

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To return, however, to the great ideas which pervade the service—(1) access, (2) communion, (3) intercession—we have to see how these may properly find expression in what we now call “ordinary worship,” and for this purpose I intend to take the practical plan of analysing the actual service to be used on the Lord’s Day.

Since there is at present no order that can be considered authoritative (the strict order of the Directory having fallen into desuetude), there is a danger in endeavouring to illustrate what I have been saying, of putting forward what might be regarded as mere personal preferences. And to avoid this danger I think I may be justified in taking, as possessing at least a quasi-authority,—an authority due to years of careful deliberation by a Committee of all shades of opinion, and whose work has been thought fit to be sent out for the consideration of the Church,—the orders contained in the recommendations of the Committee on Public Worship and Sacraments.¹ Neither of the “orders” given have any binding force, except what is inherent in them by reason of their intelligible coherence. Between the two there is little difference, except that in the one, the sermon precedes, in the other follows, the intercessory prayers. I

¹ Public Worship and Sacraments. Published in pamphlet form by Messrs Blackwood & Sons.

take as my guide in the following remarks the second order, which is as follows:—

Access.—Praise; prayer—invocation, confession, supplication, Lord's Prayer.

Communion or Fellowship.—A psalm or psalms, Old Testament lesson, praise, New Testament lesson, praise or Apostles' Creed.

Intercession.—Prayer—thanksgiving, intercession; praise.

Instruction.—Prayer for illumination, sermon, prayer, offertory, praise, benediction.

The custom of beginning with an opening psalm or hymn—which should ordinarily be of the nature of an invitatory, or, as it was anciently called, "a gathering psalm"—is now practically universal, and there is much to be said in its favour. It fulfils the important purpose of helping to compose the minds of the worshippers, and indeed I have heard it given out with the somewhat quaint but not inappropriate preface, "Let us compose our minds for the worship of God, by singing . . ." Being thus a preparation for, or introduction to, the service proper, it ought to be consistently chosen with this in view. An indiscriminate use of the metrical psalms for this purpose is greatly to be deprecated, inasmuch as they are admittedly disfigured by frequent "crudities of diction" bordering

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on the ludicrous. But there is ample scope for the choice of suitable opening verses embodying a call to worship. The gathering psalm, which is now an integral part of the ordinary service, was formerly sung before the service began, and formed part of the reader's service,—a usage which still prevails, it is said, in reformed German churches, and perhaps finds a parallel in the processional hymn in many of the Anglican communion. It should still preserve its proper character, and much of the edifying power of the service will depend on its careful choice.

The opening psalm having served its purpose of composing the minds of the congregation, and having at least helped them in their endeavour to place themselves as in the presence of God, it becomes our duty to lead the devotions of the people, and to express those spiritual aspirations and desires which are natural and fitting in drawing near to God. The essential element in this approach to God must be confession of sin and prayer for pardon. No reasonable worship can proceed otherwise. But it is natural, and indeed inevitable, that it should be prefaced by a solemn invocation of Almighty God, whose pardoning grace is to be sought through Jesus Christ, and that the prayer for pardon and peace should be accompanied by some comforting and strengthening word of promise, whereby the

**The
prayers
of access.**

souls of the worshippers may be assured that the pardon sincerely sought is as truly and really given. It would also seem to be most natural and fitting that the Christian people, having made open confession of sin and shortcoming, should anew dedicate themselves to God, with full purpose of offering to Him whole-hearted and unstained service in life, and for this purpose, that they should offer supplications to Him for the supply of needed grace. This prayer may fitly close with the Lord's Prayer, offered in the filial spirit, which is possible to sincere open-hearted worshippers alone.

Now in this prayer, which for convenience I have called a prayer of access or approach, though there is but one spiritual act, there are several separate elements constituting that act, each of which demands from minister and people a different spiritual attitude. There is,

Adoration.

first, the Invocation, a solemn address to Almighty God, in which adoration is, and should be, the one supreme note—a note dominating the entire service. “Adoration,” it has been truly said, “must be the basis of true thanksgiving and praise and prayer; it is the fitting acknowledgment of our real relations with God which should precede them.” But if it is real it will not only precede, it will accompany and pervade them. So that when we pass from invocation to confession, in

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which the glance of the soul is towards God but also towards self, there will still be present this sense of the greatness of God, this sense of the emptiness and insignificance of self which impels us to prostrate ourselves in spirit before Him. The same will hold true when from confession we pass to the prayer for pardon and peace, to a renewal of our dedication, and to supplications for God's grace. Like a thread of gold this spiritual chain will unite them all, so that from first to last these varying efforts of the soul will be one—a solemn act of adoration, a humble yet daring venture to pass into the very presence of God, and to claim, as our right in Christ and through Him, communion with the Father.

Now if this be the real meaning of the opening prayer in the service, if it be, as it should be, a *Orare est laborare.* real transaction and not a mere ceremonial performance, is it not obvious that it makes great demands upon the mental and spiritual powers of the minister? It is here that we realise the meaning of a saying of the late Canon Liddon, "prayer is a form of hard work," a reversal of the old Latin motto, *Laborare est orare*. I do not refer to the mere labour of conceiving and uttering the words which may form such a prayer, but to the spiritual tension involved in a sincere and whole-hearted presentation before God of the needs of our people. To do this work

in a perfunctory fashion is to fail on the very threshold of the sanctuary. We must school and discipline ourselves; we must resolutely set our faces against the tyranny of routine. We must force ourselves to remember that in this prayer with which our service begins we are actually to bear the real spiritual needs of our people before God,—no mere formal matter, but actual sins that have been conceived or committed are included under the phrases we are to use: real forgiveness is asked, and if asked in sincerity, is to be obtained; it is a real dedication of body, soul, and spirit that we are to offer; it is a real need of grace that we are to express in the supplications.

The importance of careful premeditation for the adequate rendering of this prayer is obvious for two reasons, one towards God, the other towards the people. Mere vague pietistic phrases cannot express definite spiritual movements. Confession is a real transaction between the souls of the worshippers and Him who alone can forgive sins. Definiteness and simplicity ought therefore to be its characteristics. Indeed, Peter's prayer is the model and gives the spirit, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." To enlarge in terms of conscious eloquence upon the sins which have stained our souls and the souls of our fellow-worshippers is to contradict the very spirit of the prayer, and to approach God not as a penitent but as a

rhetorician. We are addressing God not primarily in our own name, but in the name of our people. This spiritual relation must therefore dominate and direct our prayer. Whether the actual words are read or remembered, or spoken out of the fulness of a present spiritual experience to which we have attained by personal meditation and prayer, this must hold equally true. Not with cloudy words of human vanity, but with words expressing the reality of the soul's need, we are to address God. But there is a second reason for clearness and simplicity. We cannot otherwise carry our people along with us. We may indeed succeed in securing their admiration, but unless this be as a means to the higher end of true devotion it is a loss rather than a gain. In the biography of one of our divines of a past generation, his power of extempore prayer is thus referred to: "It may be added that this inexhaustible variety of thought and expression in prayer bespoke a mind richly stored with religious ideas, and at once surprised and delighted those who regularly attended his ministry." But such gifts, while very properly to be used in spiritual meditation and in the form of devotional addresses, are surely not in place in the public service of the Church, for the object of that service is the worship of God and not the surprise and delight of man. Thus to interest our people is not to take them with us into

the holy of holies, but to leave them in the outer court admiring the mere externals. The only language suitable is language modelled on the prayer of our Lord—of universal application and penetrating power,—language which will indeed go to a man's heart and make him feel (without any suggestion of conscious eloquence or literary beauty) that it expresses what is in him a reality, that it asks for what in him is a real need, that it offers what is from him a real sacrifice of body, soul, and spirit. All the more fitting and helpful is it that the prayer should culminate with the Lord's Prayer offered in the filial spirit.

I have dwelt at some length on the elements proper for the opening prayers, because it is of great importance that these should be clearly grasped and always expressed with great definiteness. Of supreme importance, indeed, is it to make our people realise, as far as we may, that we are pressing with them into the holy of holies, and that by real confession, real repentance, and as we are assured real forgiveness to all who sincerely repent and unfeignedly believe, we are to attain united fellowship with God the Father, and to hold communion with Him through Jesus Christ His Son.

The second division of the service consists of readings from holy Scripture, with psalms or hymns of praise. This part of the act of united

worship I have ventured to call the act of fellow-
 ship, in which, after confession and pardon,
 the congregation receive God's message
 through His Word, and respond to it by
 acts of praise. It has been a historic
 custom, alike in the Scottish as in other branches
 of the Church, to make large use here of the
 Psalms, and the custom is to be commended
 for this above all other reasons, that the Psalter
 is itself the greatest storehouse of devotion. It
 meets the soul in its every need. The nature of
 the Hebrew poetry itself suggests that the Psalms
 should be sung antiphonally; but this is not always
 possible, and by regular reading the same devotional
 gain may be achieved. It is not too much to say
 that a service which refrains from making such sus-
 tained and continuous use of the Psalter deliber-
 ately impoverishes itself, and throws away one
 of its most helpful and edifying elements. The
 Psalms are not only fitted for praise, they are also
 a great means of spiritual knowledge; and though
 only a section of them have any direct Christian
 bearing, yet in their general spiritual teaching they
 are in essence the same, and they are appropriately
 claimed and stamped for Christian use by the
 Doxology. This, indeed, seems to be the reason
 why, when used in this way, they are closed with
 the "Gloria."

The psalms are followed by a lesson from the

Old Testament and a lesson from the New, each accompanied by a hymn of praise. Before dealing with the lessons, let us ask on what principle these hymns are to be chosen.

The
responsory
hymns.

Turning to any early service we see at once that they had a special character, and their connection with the lessons shows what that character is. They are responsory. They are a glad acknowledgment and acceptance of the Word which has been heard. Of these responsory hymns the "Te Deum" is the type, and the guiding thought for the due use of it, "as well as for all other responsive canticles, is that whatever of Holy Scripture has preceded it, is not read for its own sake alone or even chiefly, nor for the sake of the particular lessons which it may convey, but as a sample and specimen of the vast whole to which it belongs—a single streak of the 'cloudless depth of light' which beams from the great orb of Scripture."¹ The same may be said of the "Magnificat," the "Benedictus," the "Nunc Dimittis," and other canticles which have been used in this connection. The historical origin of the responsory has been traced to a custom of which an example is found in the book of Ezra, where, in the service as arranged by him, the Levites, after the reading of the Word, standing on the stairs of the pulpit, cried out, "Stand up and bless the Lord your God,"

¹ Cf. Freeman, 'Principles of Divine Service,' vol. i. p. 350.

whereupon the people rose and sang to the praise of God before proceeding to prayer. The principle guiding the choice of hymns for this part of the service is thus obvious; and though it may not be possible rigidly to adhere to it, it will certainly be found to be a great help.¹

The place of holy Scripture in the service falls now to be considered. It is almost incredible, and yet it is an indisputable fact, that within the

The place
of holy
Scripture
in wor-
ship.

Scottish Church, even so recently as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the simple reading of the Scriptures during the public services of the Church was everywhere given up, and in many parishes would not even have been tolerated. There was, of course, abundant exposition of Scripture; but the simple reading of a chapter without note or comment, which we are accustomed now to regard as a most natural and edifying part of our service—strange as it may seem—was looked upon as a grave and serious innovation, and any minister who ventured to trespass in this way had to face a storm of opposition. It is curious to read in Dr Gerard's work on 'Pastoral Care,' published in 1799, words like the following, which throw an interesting sidelight on the state of feeling which made them necessary. They are quoted by Dr Sprott in his ad-

¹ Cf. 'Praises with Understanding,' a useful little guide to the choice of Psalms and Hymns. By Mr Charters Macpherson. Hitt, Edinburgh.

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mirable lectures on the 'Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland.' "Reading the Scriptures seems to me so necessary and essential a part of Christian worship, that the omission of it is the most faulty defect in the present practice of our Church. Yet so great is the perverseness and weak bigotry of many, that in some places it would create a schism to attempt to introduce it; and even the authority of the Directory, framed in the revered ages of the Church, would not be sufficient to secure from blame the person who introduced it. I know nothing, however, which better deserves a man's running the risk of giving offence than restoring the public reading of the Scriptures."

Men were of course found to run the risk and save the Church from this shameful defect, which length of time had invested with a false authority; but it was not until the year 1856 that the Church enjoined all the clergy to read both from the Old and New Testaments at each diet of worship. Thus was restored that venerable and beautiful custom from which the reformed Church without violence to her fundamental principles could not permanently depart, of solemnly reading the sacred Scriptures, as at once a supreme means of edification, a sanction for all other parts of worship, and a constant reassertion of the fact that in the life of the Church, as well as of her individual members, we are dependent not on the shifting sands of human

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thought, but on the eternal and unchanging truth of God.

The key to the origin of the custom in the Christian Church is found in the practice, obviously general in our Lord's time, of reading two distinct portions of Scripture, and of marking off the reading as a definite and solemn part of the common worship. From the very beginning in the Apostolic Church, it would seem that this custom of reading from the law and the prophets was continued; and by-and-by, when the letters of the apostles were produced and the collections made which we know now as the Gospels, they were also read in the churches. Probably from the fourth century the practice of reading regularly, according to an established order, was firmly rooted in the Church, the ordinary custom being to have four lessons—two from the Old Testament and two from the New. In the Western Church this abundant use of Scripture fell away, giving place to single verses or groups of verses, so that in a whole week only a single chapter would be read. At the Reformation a thorough change took place. The Bible was read in the language of the people, and not only so, but according to system and with apostolic fulness,—an effort being made in this way to restore to the people something of that historical knowledge of divine things which must be the basis of spiritual development. In the First

Book of Discipline ministers are enjoined to read the books of Scripture continuously, “without skipping and divagation from place to place.” In the Directory the same injunction is repeated. The regular and systematic reading of Scripture becomes the rule of the Church of Scotland, and in a classic passage of the Westminster Confession the spirit in which this restoration of the Bible to its true place in public worship was achieved is powerfully set forth:—

“The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God—who is truth itself—the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverend esteem of the holy Scripture; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, the many other incomparable excellences and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”

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It is this confident belief in the ever present power of the Spirit to make the Word a means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation, that has demanded for the Bible large and constant use, not merely in private, but above all in the church. "It is no little aid," says Freeman,¹ "to the spiritual powers and aspirations to hear the Scripture thus read in the church rather than in the parlour or closet. It is in the church that they are fulfilled. The place is solemn and holy, sacred in its heavenly realities and in its awful associations. Its tone is unearthly. We are there assembled with the door of our hearts shut for fear of our spiritual enemies, and awestruck and attentive, for the ground whereon we stand is holy. The church is a refuge from the cares, the frivolities, and the sensualities of the world."

The purpose for which Scripture is read in church, as elsewhere, is that we may know God. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding;" and "the first reason for desiring to know God is that we may glorify Him when known." The connection of the reading of Scripture with psalms and hymns of praise is thus most natural and fitting. It has been characteristic of nearly every office in every

¹ Principles of Divine Service, vol. i. p. 418.

branch of the Church, and the motive which impelled their use is the same which led to the use of the Creed as an act of faith, a joyful acceptance of the truth which has been heard and which is taken up individually, so that the reality of personal conviction may be shown to be the foundation for the united prayer which the congregation together make in the unity of the fellowship which has now again been realised.

The second main division of the service has now been accomplished, and the spiritual act of fellowship has been, as far as possible, realised ;

**The acts of
interces-
sion and
thanks-
giving.**

for we have led our people through confession to the prayers for pardon and grace.

Thus pardoned and strengthened they have heard God's Word, and they have joyfully responded to it. The third and culminating point is reached in the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, where we make use of our conscious fellowship with God to offer thanks, and to intercede not only on our own behalf but on behalf of others. No less careful should the preparation both of mind and heart be for this supreme spiritual act. In the first place, it should be so rendered as to enable all to realise the gladness and joy which it is intended to express. Further, it should be so conceived as to omit no ground of thankfulness and no necessity of grace. Above all, it should be as far as possible removed from formality, and especially

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as it does not seem to admit of reasonable doubt that this part of the ordinary service, culminating in thanksgiving and intercession, is a substitution for what was and should again be "the characteristic and principal act of ordinary worship on the Lord's Day"—viz., the Communion. "Our Sunday forenoon service," as has been pointed out, "is in fact a truncated communion service." "The Scottish clergy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries clearly recognised this, when to the prayer of thanksgiving after sermon they added the other leading features of the communion—the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the collection or offering,"¹ &c. In the order of service which I am endeavouring to analyse, this idea, however, does not appear. It proceeds frankly on the assumption that there may be divine service independent of the eucharistic rite or supplementary to it.

After the reading of Scripture, which may also be responded to by the recital of the Creed, and which should certainly be followed by a psalm or hymn expressing an act of faith or of joyful acceptance, we are called to lead our people in intercession. Short of the administration of the holy sacrament itself it is the highest privilege of our office, and it is well worthy of the greatest pains. There are many models to guide us; but in this, as in all other parts of prayer, the public

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cessory
prayers.**

¹ Rev. Duncan MacGregor, in 'Scots Magazine,' 1899.

ministration should be accompanied by a parallel exercise, continuously carried out in private. Later on I shall say something of the duty of prayer in its bearing on the life of the ministry; but at this point, I refer to the reality and power which will be added to our public intercession if in our private prayers we are constantly exercising the pastoral spirit and devoting much thought to the needs of others. I can conceive no occupation more dreary and degrading than that of a minister publicly offering prayers for which there is no private and personal background in his own life. It is not too much to say that "intercession is a primary duty" of the ministry. No man who is a true pastor can fail to bear on his mind those whom he is trying to help and who are spiritually under his care. "Probably," it has been said, "those to whom we are called and sent to minister will reap more benefit by prayer made daily to God by us for them than they will do by our activities and our preaching." At least it is quite certain that without such prayer much of our activity will be misspent. It would be a great help in the fulfilment of this duty to adopt what is often suggested in devotional works, a scheme of intercession for every day of the week. And perhaps the most helpful of such works will be found to be the devotions of Bishop Andrewes, a book every minister should have continually at his elbow. Nothing will teach us more

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powerfully the true meaning of intercessory prayer. "There is no class of men," says Dean Church, writing of Andrewes' Devotions, "no condition, no relation of life, no necessity or emergency of it, which does not at one time or another rise up before his memory and claim his intercession; none for whom he does not see a place in the order of God's world and find a refuge under the shadow of His wings."¹ "He casts his mind over the varied needs and perils of civilised society; the different classes of which it is composed, from the highest to the lowest; the different estates and conditions of men, their mutual relations of dependence or service; the great divisions of Christendom; above all, the downtrodden, oppressed, forgotten individuals who are apt to be overlooked in a comprehensive survey of the mass."² There is no exaggeration in saying that these devotions are models of intercession, breathing the very spirit which should animate every ministry.

If in some such way as this our minds are trained in the habit of intercession, the public intercessions which it is our duty to offer will cease to be formal—will be marked by a character of reality which will greatly help to unite us with our people in the common act of pleading for others. A recent

¹ Pascal and other Sermons, p. 89.

² Lancelot Andrewes, by R. L. Ottley, p. 188.

writer¹ on "the cure of souls" has well said, that every minister should form a litany for himself, with much care and pains, collecting all the ordinary petitions which occur to him or are suggested by his experience as a minister. The natural order suggested in Holy Scripture is to pray first for the Church, next for kings and all in authority, and then for the afflicted. In addition to these, experience and study will suggest a great variety of intercessions which should at least from time to time be used. This is a matter in which carelessness and neglect may injure many a soul who may have come with a burden, remembering distant friends who are in trouble, soldiers and sailors who are in danger, little children, the sick and the dying, and hearing no word of reference to their needs. For this reason, even when for sufficient cause the whole service is shortened, the intercessions as well as the other prayers should be so framed as to provide for every possible need.

The general thanksgiving, which in the order we are dealing with is joined with the intercession, may either precede or follow. In either case it should contain thanks for all God's blessings—in creation, providence, and grace. And if it follows the intercessions, it is most fitting that according to the ancient and

**Prayers of
thanks-
giving.**

¹ Yale Lectures, by Dr John Watson, p. 217.

beautiful custom it should conclude with a prayer, which otherwise may follow the intercessions, in thankful remembrance of the victory of the faithful departed, and a petition in the communion of saints that we with them may attain eternal peace. To such a prayer there can be no well-grounded objection, and to many souls it will be an unfailing source of comfort and joy. It is surely right to call this the culminating point of the service; and if it has been carried out in the spirit which I have endeavoured to indicate, and according to the definite and clear outline suggested—each part receiving appropriate expression—we should increasingly feel that our people are not only consciously appreciating the divine service and realising its value, but are becoming as a whole more devotional, and more sensible of their responsibility as a holy and royal priesthood for the offering in common worship of spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This will be our true reward. We may have to wait for it, but it will come, and it is worth waiting for. The hymn following, where possible, may be a special anthem in which the highest gifts of the people are offered in the service of praise. Where this is not possible, a general psalm or hymn may be chosen in which the thoughts of the congregation may find due expression after the spiritual acts just completed. A prayer for illumina-

tion should precede the sermon; an ascription of praise and a prayer for blessing should follow. The offertory or collection when taken, as it should be, in the church, should be placed on the Lord's table, that by a visible act the people may see their gifts unitedly dedicated to God. It is generally most fitting to make the closing hymn in harmony with the teaching of the sermon, but there are many psalms and hymns suitable for dismissal which may very properly be used.

The benediction, which closes the whole service, should never be pronounced except in the most solemn and reverent manner; for it is to be regarded as God's answer to the desires of His faithful people: "He will bless His people with peace." And He vouchsafes to make His minister the channel of that blessing, not as if there was in him any special power to bless, but because, as our form of Church government expresses it, he is in virtue of his office "to bless the people from God."

I have dwelt at considerable length on the outline of the service for public worship because, although in the work of the parish we may be called to conduct all kinds of services suitable for special requirements, this is the supreme act of ordinary congregational devotion into which we should regularly and consistently put all our mental and spiritual strength.

Regard
every ser-
vice as
a great
occasion.

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From the very first we should determine to give our people not the minimum but the maximum of spiritual opportunity, and to regard every service as a great occasion, whether attended by few or many. Let us be chary of making "orders" of our own, but if we do, let us try to explain them first to ourselves, and then, if possible, to our people. This will compel us to avoid fanciful and fantastic methods, and to seek a rational and historic basis. Nothing will teach a man more convincingly the value of the high models of prayer in the ancient liturgies than a little experience in the regular conduct of public worship. Begin as we choose, we will ultimately end in a liturgy of our own, and if we are reasonably candid we will come to wonder whether, after all, it is superior to the ancient treasures of the Church. If we have rescued from the hymnology of the past the great songs of the Church universal—the *Te Deum*, the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus*, the *Gloria in Excelsis*—why should we not also take to ourselves what is best and most helpful in all the devotions of the Christian ages, those ancient prayers which seem to breathe a spirit almost unattainable in our feverish and worldly time—a spirit redolent of the age of the martyrs—a calm, high, and reverent adoration untainted by local or selfish considerations, but expressing in language universally true the needs and aspirations of the

Christian soul. For whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the order and mode of worship, there must surely be a common conviction that the prayers of the Church should be couched in language of the utmost simplicity and reverence: conscious ornament of any kind is to be banished from common prayer. Nothing should be admitted but that spontaneous beauty which is the natural flower of devout thought. For this end a constant devotional use of the Psalms is a great help, and the minister who fails to make use of them is not only missing a great means of personal progress, but is failing to store his mind with the richest and most varied treasures of devotion. Turning constantly to this "pure well undefiled," we shall not require the warnings generally given to avoid unseemly language in our public prayers. We shall unconsciously shun all preaching prayers. We shall not pray to prove our learning, or to convey information, or to rouse our people to some particular enterprise we have in hand, or to condemn those who disagree with us, or to administer a rebuke, or to exhibit eloquence, or to prove our familiarity with God, or to assert the importance of the section of the Church to which we belong; and, above all, we will refrain from so praying as to exhaust even the most reverent—for however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak. We shall remember that prayer is addressed to God

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and not to man, endeavouring always to form our prayers with that in view.

Public worship, be it remembered, can never be rightly conceived if the first and only thought is the edification of the individual. The supreme note of all true Christian worship must be: "We praise Thee, O God." From this thought we pass to personal needs. And of worship generally that is true which St Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

THE MINISTRY OF THE SACRAMENTS.

BAPTISM, AND INSTRUCTION FOR FIRST COMMUNION.

“Baptizantes . . . docentes eos servare omnia quæcumque mandavi vobis.”

THE place which the ministry of sacraments holds in the work of the Christian pastor is indicated in

The place of this ministry. the words of St Paul, quoted in this connection in the Form of Church Government: “Let a man so account of us as of

the ministers of Christ and *stewards of the mysteries of God.*” The same phrase is used in the Directory, in connection specially with the sacrament of baptism, where it is said that baptism is not to be administered but by a minister of Christ “called to be the steward of the mysteries of God.”

Sometimes comparison is made between the relative importance of preaching and the administration of the sacraments; and a passage is quoted from St Paul with the view of proving that he

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regarded preaching as practically more important than administering sacraments—the passage, namely, from 1 Cor. i. 14-17: “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; . . . for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” The application of this text has always appeared to me singularly inappropriate. It is true, as St Augustine says, “even the less learned can baptize perfectly, but perfectly to preach the Gospel is a far more difficult task, and requires qualifications far more rare.” But St Paul in this passage is not disparaging the sacrament; he is rather rebuking the party spirit which had made a point of division because some had been baptized by himself, and had regarded this as a special honour. And, apart altogether from this reference of St Paul, the administration of baptism is bound up with the injunction to preach. It is a part of our commission. In our ordination we are given authority to minister the Word and sacraments. Whatever therefore be our view of the relative importance of the ministry of sacraments, we are certainly bound to fulfil it with reverence and care.

Of Christian ordinances none has had a more remarkable history, none, perhaps, has given rise to greater dispute, and yet none survives in greater vigour than the sacrament of baptism. Whether under the extreme form of an *opus operatum* or the other extreme of mere

The
vitality
of the or-
dinances.

Baptism as an Ethical Force 111

dedication, it abides and shows no sign of passing away. That it has roots beyond the Christian era is no derogation from its reality as a Christian institution. For it has ever been characteristic of Christianity that it takes up into itself the essential truth in previous systems and turns them to their highest uses. That baptism has been from the beginning the mode of admission to the Church admits of no doubt. This fact indeed lies on the very surface of the New Testament documents. Interpret the doctrine as we may, the fact remains. And certainly the doctrine is sufficiently plain and clear—at least the terms in which it is stated in the Epistles of St Paul are strong enough to justify the high form which it assumed in the early Church. The phrases describing it in the first centuries, when baptism was only or generally administered to persons who were conscious of the act, and who had been under instruction, are an expansion of the ideas suggested in apostolic teaching; and when we remember that in those days the act of baptism was preceded by a long and exacting period of instruction and discipline, it is not difficult to see how these terms assumed a very real meaning to the baptized. To the earnest soul, convinced of the reality of the Christian faith and filled with the resolution to put aside the old life with its affections and lusts, the water in which, after his long catechumenate, he was plunged, was to him veritably “the water of life.”

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Apart from all doctrinal considerations, the effect of such a rite as a factor in ethical progress will be admitted by all fair-minded students of Church history. An illustration is given in the language of Cyprian to his friend Donatus describing his conversion from heathenism: "Such were my frequent musings; for whereas I was encumbered with the many sins of my past life, which it seemed impossible to get rid of, so I had used myself to give way to my clinging infirmities, and, from despair of better things, to humour the evils of my heart, as slaves born in my house and my proper offspring. But after that life-giving water succoured me, washing away the stains of former years and pouring into my cleansed and hallowed breast the light which comes from heaven, after that I drank in the heavenly Spirit, and was created into a new man by a second birth—then marvellously what before was doubtful became plain to me, what was hidden was revealed, what was dark began to shine, what was before difficult now had a way and a means, what had seemed impossible now could be achieved, what was in me of the guilty flesh now confessed that it was earthy, what was quickened in me by the Holy Ghost now had a growth according to God." The passage is somewhat rhetorical, and perhaps blends in indistinguishable confusion the outward and the inner, but "the stress of the description is ethical—the transition from the

death of sin to the life of righteousness."¹ It is an interesting example of the power of the rite on the individual, and an indication of the basis which on this early conception of the ordinance it afforded for the development of the spiritual life.

It is not my purpose here, however, to speak of the doctrine of baptism, which does not properly lie within the domain of pastoral theology.

Two
points
of view.

I have to consider it only from two points of view—as an ordinance which it is the duty of the pastor to administer, and as a point toward which or from which religious instruction or training may proceed. Nor is there any necessity here for discussing the form of the rite which has varied and still varies throughout the Church. Immersion, which used to be general, has become the exception, and sprinkling or affusion is now the rule. The baptism of infants, except with the comparatively limited body of the Baptists, is a universal custom; and this has opened up an entirely new problem of the highest importance in the practical work and teaching of the Church. At the same time, it is clear that the meaning and purpose of baptism within the Church remains the same; for although in the case of the adult there is an immediate and conscious response on the part of the individual, an appropriation by personal

¹ Cf. Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 402.

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faith of that spiritual gift or relation which baptism signifies and exhibits—namely, spiritual cleansing and personal initiation into the Church, this response is presumed on the part of the child and guaranteed by the parents or other sponsors as well as by the Church, which, by receiving children through this ordinance, assumes responsibility for the instruction and discipline of its baptized members till they are led on to full communion in the Church through the sacrament of the Holy Supper. In other words, the Church, in baptizing children, regards baptism from a different point of view; but this makes no difference in her sense of responsibility. In the case of adults that responsibility must be discharged before, in the case of children after, the rite has been administered.

Now this association with the rite of the obligation to teach and train the baptized, at once obviates the objection which has at many periods been directed against the doctrine of the Church. But it must be admitted that in practice the Church herself has too often given grounds for the accusation that a magical power is inherent in the mere element of the sacrament; and superstitious views are always apt to rise in regard to this ordinance. The remedy for these, however, is not to be sought in any lowering or modification of the doctrine of the Church, but in careful insistence upon the true

**The
obligation
to teach.**

doctrine and by practical carrying out of the correlative duty. It has been well pointed out that "it must be borne in mind that from the first the sacrament was also accompanied by an ethical training in the catechumenate. The co-existence of a teaching Church is invariably assumed also in the later administration of the rite; nor has the administration of baptism been allowed to out-strip the advance of the ecclesiastical organisation, as though otherwise baptism would lose its efficiency."¹ In short, whatever spiritual benefit the sacrament confers or exhibits, that benefit, for its full and conscious personal appropriation and attainment, demands a fitting education. Even if it be true, as it undoubtedly is, that the Church in its teaching has set spiritual and doctrinal ideas in the forefront rather than ethical, it is no less true that those spiritual ideas—such as the nature of God, the incarnation of the Son, the redemption of the world and the calling in Christ of a new humanity to be one in Him—have been the fertilising sources of ethical culture and development. For a similar reason, baptism has held and will always hold a position of prominence in the practical work of the Church. It asserts the need of inward purity, and proclaims the possibility of a likeness to God being attained through the gift of divine grace, with corresponding training in the spiritual and ethical

¹ Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 406.

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requirements appropriate to the development of individual character.

The sound wisdom which at many critical points has guided the Western Church was perhaps never more clearly exhibited than in the de-
Infant baptism. liberate adoption, apparently comparatively early in its career, of the general practice of infant baptism. The wisdom or validity of the step is to this day a vexed question with some. But its practically universal adoption has settled the matter as far as the Church at large is concerned. Based as it is on no absolutely certain evidence of apostolic precept or practice, it is a natural, almost an inevitable, consequence of the conception of the Church as a social unity and a spiritual family. And though it seems to assert more strongly that side of the sacrament in which its benefit is regarded as independent of the individual and coming from God alone, it really brings out with corresponding force the obligation of the Church to supply what is lacking. The transition from adult to infant baptism, which was probably hastened by the importance attached to the ordinance and the danger of delay, "at least bore witness," says Dr Allen,¹ "to the faith that all men were capable of receiving a divine nurture, and that education is the divine method of evoking the image of God in man."

¹ Christian Institutions, p. 407.

It is this aspect of baptism which gives it practical importance in the pastoral work of the Church. It

**Baptism
a basis
for re-
ligious in-
struction.** is the Church's base of operations for religious instruction and training, and therefore it is of the highest value in the ministry

to give clear teaching in regard to its meaning and purpose, to administer the ordinance in such a way as to ensure that its meaning will not be obscured, and to follow it up by appropriate teaching in which it is not, as is often the case, entirely ignored, but is used at once as a ground of confidence that the promise signified in the sacrament of the gift of new life will be realised, and an encouragement to use diligently and faithfully the means by which the grace of baptism may be quickened. Used in this way, it seems to present a powerful means of stirring the conscience and rousing the most thoughtless to the deeper meaning of the Christian calling. For even in those cases, always too numerous in pastoral experience, where those with whom we have to deal have plainly fallen away from "the grace of baptism" and are "walking contrary thereto," it is on the ground of their baptism that we can make our appeal and urge conversion as the personal self-application and appropriation of God's offered gift.

I have said that it is no part of my purpose here to expound the doctrine of baptism, inasmuch as

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I am dealing entirely with its practical position
in the ordinary work of the ministry.

Need of
clear
views.

But judging from my own experience,
I may say that very early in our work we
are sure to find it necessary to form clear views
on the subject in order that we may be able to deal
consistently with our people in the administration
of the ordinance, and also that we may be able
to give sound and intelligent instruction on its
meaning and purpose. The true formalist in this
matter will turn out to be the pastor who is con-
tent to perform the rite in a perfunctory manner
as an empty ceremony, leaving the people to re-
gard it as a mere naming of the child, or to import
into it whatever superstitious notions vague and
uninstructed tradition may suggest. Even regarded
as a solemn dedication of the child to God, it pre-
sents a wonderful opportunity for spiritual edifica-
tion to the parents and friends as well as to the
congregation. None but the most superficial and
unimaginative of pastors will ever allow himself to
think lightly of it, or to convey the impression that
it is a prosaic function continued in accordance
with ancient custom. To do so is to be untrue
even to the ordinary human instinct of the sanctity
of life, not to speak of the higher thought of the
child, still surrounded by heavenly influences, em-
barking on the stormy sea of temptation and trial,
and the yet loftier consideration of our duty as

ministers in this as in other matters called to be "stewards of the mysteries of God." On the very lowest view of the sacrament it is a great occasion and a great opportunity.

But we are not justified by the teaching of our Church or by holy Scripture in resting content with the lowest view: we are bound to realise and impress upon the people its higher and diviner side as an ordinance of God, as the sacrament of the new life; and for that reason we are to base our instruction on the words of the institution, "whose meaning, genuineness, credibility, and abiding validity" (to use the words of Van Oosterzee) have been established beyond all reasonable doubt. All explanations of the rite must start from this—that it is an institution of Christ, that it has a permanent authority, that it is a sign and a seal of ingrafting into Himself (for as many as have been baptized have put on Christ), that it signifies in particular the cleansing from sin—which is the need of all, and the gift of new life—which is also a universal need, both of which are attained by the death and resurrection of Jesus. While, therefore, we begin by taking the words of the institution as our warrant and authority for administering the sacrament, we must be careful not to stultify our position by speaking later as if there were no reality underlying the ordinance; as if God, in whose name it is administered, were

**The divine
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a mere maker of promises and did not really fulfil them, as if "the grace of baptism" were merely an illusion and the act by which the baptized person is admitted to the Church and brought within the scope of its influence and the pale of its privileges had no actual bearing on the life, present or future, of the person so baptized. For, short of the mechanical theory of the sacrament, we have the reasonable and guarded position of the reformed theology and of our own standards, wherein this much is clear, that the person baptized is placed by his baptism in a spiritual relation entirely different from that of the unbaptized, a relation which, if rightly used, will have far-reaching results in his life. In common with every branch of the historic Church, baptism is to be regarded not merely as a ceremony of dedication but as the sacrament of the new life. This view, however, is carefully guarded, for no gift of God is separated from the use of means, and the appropriation of the gift can only be by faith—the divine life depending for its full fruition upon appropriate nurture.

Putting aside, however, all question of theory, we may say that the practical system of the Church seems to demand that every baptized child is to be taught and trained on the presumption that he is a Christian "from the earliest possible period after his baptism" onward to his admission to communion, when he is

The
practical
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dinance.

asked to assume personally the responsibility taken in his name at baptism. The whole idea underlying infant baptism is, that the child should as soon as possible be taught the faith into which he has been baptized, and also to "war a good warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil," and so to go forward in knowledge and practice as to be fitted in due time to partake of the holy communion and to continue a faithful member of Christ's Church. There is no branch of the Christian Church—even those teaching the highest doctrine—which asserts that a child is safe or saved because it is baptized. What is maintained even under the most extreme view is that the baptized are constituted members of Christ and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven; and are thereby brought within the scope of those treasures of grace which God has committed to His Church. The means of grace are only effective as blessed of Him; but if we regard the ordinance as a divine ordinance, the one thing we are sure of is, that if we do our part God will do His.

Now it may be necessary for practical guidance to say something as to the administration of the ordinance in its normal form. I content myself with referring to the Directory and the form provided in the Book of Common Order, only remarking on the main elements of the service in order to bring out what is involved. It rightly includes a statement of the institution

**Adminis-
tration of
baptism.**

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and a brief explanation of the ordinance. The sponsors—who in our country are usually the parents—take what are technically called “the vows.” These should include a profession of faith and a promise to instruct the child in the faith and fear of God, also an engagement in the name of the child, who is really the person involved in the act, to renounce evil and to accept the faith and obedience of Christ. A prayer follows, in which God is asked to sanctify and bless His own ordinance, and to bestow upon the child all the blessings signified by it. According to primitive custom, the Directory enjoins a prayer for the sanctifying of the water to be used. Then follows the actual administration of the rite, in which, calling the child by name, the minister repeats the baptismal formula and baptizes the child with water. This should be done by pouring or sprinkling, though immersion, the primitive practice, is not forbidden. The child may then be blessed with the apostolic benediction; prayers of thanksgiving offered for the child’s reception into the family of the Church; for the sponsors, that they may discharge their duties faithfully; thanksgiving for the mother; and a prayer for the congregation that they may walk worthy of their baptism.

Baptismal relations.

There are three relations indicated by such a service: (1) a new relation between the child and Christ, (2) between the parents or

sponsors and the Church, (3) between the baptized and the Church.

It is for this reason that I have said baptism is the Church's base or starting-point for religious education. Indeed it is not too much to say that the whole practical system of the Church proceeds upon the engagement entered into by the child and the fulfilment of the corresponding obligations; so that the ministry of baptism really branches out into the work of teaching, and the full responsibility of the Church can only be met by each minister recognising that he is responsible for providing for the children a complete system of religious instruction, which shall carry them on as instructed Christians to full communion in the Church and fit them to be faithful members of the body of Christ. Between baptism and first communion there lies a period where a responsibility of education must be fulfilled by the Church as well as by those who have presented the children for baptism. "The children have been entrusted to the Church, and the Church has to bring them up in the faith to full Church maturity."

How is this duty to be fulfilled? It must begin with the parents. The sacrament should never be administered unless the minister has taken pains to secure that the parents, as sponsors, understand what they do in presenting their child for baptism. This seems a very obvious duty, but there are

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reasons for believing that it is not always observed ; and nothing is more likely to lead to low and superstitious views of the ordinance. Besides, it strikes at the root of the sense of parental responsibility. The whole practice of infant baptism depends upon the sponsorial system, by which guarantee is given that the person baptized shall be instructed and attain that knowledge necessary to faith by which alone the grace of baptism can be appropriated. This duty belongs to the Church, but is delegated to the person who engages on behalf of the baptized, and he spiritually stands in a relation of personal identification, so to speak, for the working out of the great purpose involved in Baptism. The sacrament is something more than a mere dedication, of which it is the sponsor's duty to remind his child when he comes to years of understanding. Doubtless a great deal of the slackness in parental training is due to this loose and vague conception of the sacrament, in which it is practically reduced to an empty ceremony ; and the only remedy for such a state of things is clear and consistent teaching. Let sponsors be distinctly taught that their obligation springs from the promise of God which cannot fail. Let them understand that every baptized person is within the covenant of grace, and that it has been committed to them as representing the Church, which is the ordinary channel of that grace, to see

to it that by no fault on their part shall it fail to be appropriated and realised in those for whom they asked and will receive what God gives through this holy ordinance.

Our first duty, then, is to bring home the responsibilities of the parents as sponsors for their children. These are twofold: (1) to instruct the child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and (2) to bring him up in the fear of God. As the first duty of the sponsors is instruction in the truths of our religion, the Church has always rightly required from them a profession of faith. The Directory does not expressly prescribe any definite form in which the profession of faith may be made, though in the reformed Book of Common Order the Apostles' Creed is used. When this was abandoned the lamentable practice arose of every minister imposing whatever creed he pleased—surely the most intolerable of all.

The second duty of the parent has to do with character. He is bound not merely to instruct the child, but to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Here, again, his obligation will be illuminated and simplified by a true view of the nature of baptism and of the possibilities of spiritual life which have thereby been assured. "Sacraments," it has been truly said, "are not charms, they require a spiritual environment."

Responsi-
bility of
sponsors.

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Their natural accompaniment is education—Christian education in the true sense—and this must come in the first place from the sponsor. Hence the first duty in the ministry of baptism is to impress the importance of home influence, and to **Home in-
fluence.** foster in the parent the conviction that God is with the child and will bring to fruition what He has promised. This is the true moral leverage of Christian education, which must proceed on the idea that the child is to grow up in the life of the parent and “to be Christian in principle from his earliest years.”

The next duty in the ministry of baptism is to provide as far as possible a complete system of Christian **Religious
training.** instruction and training—a fulfilment of the command, “Feed my lambs.” For this I do not see that there is any better way than the old and well-tried method of catechetical instruction. The circumstances of each particular parish may render this difficult or impossible of attainment. In any case, as ministers of the congregation we are responsible for giving systematic instruction in the truths of religion. The work of the Sunday-school will therefore demand our careful attention. At the best it is not an ideal system, for it ought to be accompanied by regular and systematic instruction in the day-school, of which we cannot always be sure; but in the average parish it is capable of being made a fairly effective instrument. It should

for this purpose lead to and prepare for catechetical instruction, if possible in the Church. There is no scope here to go into detail, but it is obvious that this work should be conducted on a carefully prepared plan. The threefold division of the Catechism—faith, duty, and the means of grace—affords a natural system, which may easily be supplemented and filled up in detail. The object should be to make the children well instructed Christians—to teach them, in short, the religion into which they have been baptized. Without disparaging the high place of the pulpit, I am convinced that the chief source of influence in a settled ministry will be found in the work devoted to the young. What a wise writer said in 1686 is equally true to-day: “Without catechising, sermons as now in fashion upon desultory texts will be of little use; and lamentable experience has taught us that this is an undeniable truth, for ever since sermonising has justled out this necessary instruction our people have been possessed with strange errors in religion and hurried on by the spirit of giddiness of faction and rebellion.”

I come now to the teaching and preparation necessary and appropriate for first communion. I have been told that in some cases this important work is done in a very lax and unsatisfactory manner, and I have occasionally heard complaints from communicants of the disappoint-

First communion.

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ment which they experienced when expecting to receive serious instruction on personal religion and the meaning of the ordinance. Such offhand treatment of a real crisis in individual life will probably slacken their religious convictions all through. For example, I have known of a case where this was all that was done. There was, first of all, a general conversation about the weather and kindred topics, and then the minister said, "I know you have been well brought up in a good church-going family; I'll give you your communion card." In another case the minister, after a similar discursive preface, asked one question, and then said in a jocular manner, "I had better not ask you any more or you will be posing me with some questions." A very devoted minister, who takes great pains with this part of his work, has told me that on a certain occasion he was accidentally prevented from giving sufficient care in the case of one young communicant, and ever afterwards he observed the effects of it.

I give these cases for a practical reason. When in the course of our work people come to us— young or old—they expect from us as ministers of religion serious treatment, and they will thank us for nothing else. The occasion of first communion is surely the supreme case for such treatment. It is probably the greatest opportunity we have of directly influencing and guiding souls, which

after all is our business. There is of course the other extreme—equally to be avoided—that of making the preparation too strict, and perhaps repelling many. Owing to the custom prevalent among us of a long period often intervening between the time when regular religious instruction has been given and the time when first communion is generally sought, it is a duty to make the difficulties in the way of “coming forward” as light as possible. It is indeed greatly to be deplored that this step is so long delayed, and it is perhaps largely due to the fact that in the teaching in our Sunday-schools and classes it is not sufficiently held forward as a goal to which all our teaching is meant to lead. The personal aspect of the sacrament is not strongly brought out even in the Catechism, where it is left too much in the air and not definitely insisted on as a step in the religious life. This is a serious drawback, but it can be met practically by keeping it to the forefront in our own teaching and preaching. In any case, I am sure that the man who neglects this part of his ministerial duty, or performs it in a perfunctory manner, will lose a great source of power. Under any view of the sacrament, here is the most splendid opportunity which our ministry offers, and we should use it well.

The first difficulty in the way is the question of time. A class for communion should not last for

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less than six weeks. In many cases it would be advisable to hold it for even longer, **Class for first communion.** but we shall be fortunate if we can get those intending to communicate for the first time to attend six meetings. In the town, and I suppose also in the country, it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure such attendance—a very serious matter; for as far as my experience goes there is not, as in former days, the same groundwork of religious knowledge to draw upon,—there is even in a great many cases quite a hazy notion of the elementary facts of Christian faith and morals: and though there may be a good intention and an honest desire, there is grave danger that the ranks of Church membership may be swelled by uninstructed or half-instructed Christians. The class for first communion should be used as a barrier against this, and it may be with care quite effective.

Outline of instruction. Suppose we are to hold six meetings, what should be the course of our instruction?

In the first place, we should endeavour to connect the act of communion to which they are looking forward with the fact of their baptism, which alone entitles them to approach the Lord's Table, and the full responsibility of which they are about to assume. We may explain that they are not now preparing "to join the Church," since by their

baptism they are already admitted to the Church and engrafted into Christ. A great deal of confusion and misunderstanding will be removed by making this distinction clear, and pointing out that they are really now claiming the right given to them in baptism of entering into full communion with the Church; and that in order to attain that right they are called to own and accept the vows taken on their behalf in baptism, that being confirmed in the same they may receive all the privileges of membership in the Church. All this makes it necessary to explain the meaning of the baptismal covenant and of what is involved in it. It involves an assurance of grace on the part of God and a promise of faith and obedience on the part of the baptized. The practical and personal question will then arise, What is the faith they are required to hold and the life they are required to live as given up to God in baptism? The minimum of Christian knowledge required should be the belief, the ten commandments, the doctrine of the sacraments as given in the Catechism, and the Lord's Prayer. To this should be added the words of the institution.

The second meeting might deal with the Creed, which all should be required to know by heart. It is well to point out that it is an expansion of the baptismal formula, as they have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

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In a time like our own, when opinion is in a seething condition, it is surely well also to bring clearly before them the great verities of the faith. A special advantage of the Creed is its brevity, its Scriptural language, and the important element that it confines itself to the facts of our religion. The use of it in daily prayer might well be recommended as a spiritual act of faith tending to strengthen us in the Christian life. "Such virtue," as Carlyle says, lies "in belief, in these words, well spoken: 'I believe.'"

The third meeting might deal with the commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The use of the commandments for self-examination should be specially dwelt upon. Vague confession of sin, apart from a definite rule of life, is dangerous and destructive of reality. It is here, also, that the personal need of salvation from the power and penalty of sin should be dwelt upon,—the impossibility of attaining salvation without faith in Christ, sincere repentance for sin, and a diligent use of God's ordinances instituted for this very purpose—viz., The Word, sacraments, and prayer. This will afford a natural transition to the fourth and fifth meetings, which should deal specially with the doctrine of the sacraments, and particularly with the Lord's Supper. The question in the Shorter Catechism should be supplemented by reading the admirable questions in the Larger Catechism,

and also the confessional statements. The greatest care should be taken with these two lessons. It will be found worth while to write out carefully the instructions to be given. The teaching in our standards is very explicit and even high, but there is a constant tendency to drift into vagueness. This can only be avoided by a thorough study of the reformed doctrine, which is as far removed from the emasculated position of Socinianism on the one hand as it is from a crude superstition on the other. It is not creditable to an intelligent ministry that there should be among our people any uncertain sound on such important matters as the sacraments of our Lord's own appointment. Yet there is doubtless some truth in the words of the late Principal William Cunningham of the New College, whom no one could accuse of sacramentarianism, since he condemned even Calvin's view as "perhaps the greatest blot in the history of his labours as a public instructor." "We believe," he says, "that there is scarcely any subject set forth in the Confessions of the reformed Churches that is less attended to and less understood than this of the sacraments; and that many even of those who have subscribed these Confessions rest satisfied with some defective and confused notions on the subject of baptism and on the subject of the Lord's Supper, while they have scarcely even a fragment of an idea of a sacramental principle or of any

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general doctrine or theory on the subject of the sacraments."

One can well believe, if this be the condition of mind in which any minister stands, he will not eagerly desire to discuss the subject with fulness before a class of intending communicants. But is such a position creditable on the part of any man ordained to be a minister of the Word and sacraments? Are we prepared to be performers of rites which we cannot reasonably explain, and of which we have no intelligible defence to make? I cannot believe that any self-respecting man will long submit to such a yoke. It is at least due to our people that they should be instructed, and it is due to ourselves that we should endeavour to form from the first a clear view of the meaning and purpose of the ordinance which we are called to administer. And for this end we should turn to the sources of sacramental teaching in our reformed Church. A great preacher—perhaps the greatest of the early part of the nineteenth century—declared that we should read nothing that had been written on the sacraments for the last two hundred years; and he further declared that by the reading of the twenty-first article of the Scots Confession he had been delivered from that form of infidelity in regard to the sacraments which makes God a mere promiser and not a performer. It is no part of reformed doctrine to depreciate the true place of the sacra-

ments when rightly used. The present confusion in this matter may probably have roots further back in a doubt as to the incarnation, on which alone the sacraments depend; but when a high sense of their value is scouted on the ground that it is inconsistent with Presbyterianism, it is necessary to remind those who do so of the reformed position. That position is very clearly put by a former principal of Edinburgh University — “a leading man among the covenanting clergy”—John Adamson. Speaking of the bread and wine in holy communion as the Body and Blood of the Lord, he says: “Truly this is a mystery in which it does not become us to be wise above what is written, but as far as I can learn from the Word of God . . . they are so called because by them the Lord’s body and blood are represented offered and truly conferred upon the faithful.”

It is this truth that we should teach our intending communicants, and which will, when realised, make the service to them one of boundless interest and joy—that in the communion the faithful receive the “body and blood of Christ, . . . with all His benefits,” and that the Church in this sacrament thus “unites herself with that showing forth of the Lord’s death which He is ever making in heaven to the end, that because of the Passion of His dear Son God may be propitious to His people and to all mankind.”

In connection with this instruction it will be

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necessary also to deal with the subject of self-examination, for which an admirable guide is supplied in the question: "What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?" This is our opportunity for very earnest personal dealing, and should never be omitted. Only it should be done with gentleness, lest those who are of most tender conscience be repelled, "remembering always that the worthiness our Lord requireth of us is, that we be truly sorry for our sins and find our joy and salvation in Him." The custom prevailing in the Highlands, by which people keep away from communion till they are old, may have originated in a sense of reverence for the Lord's table, but it is none the less to be deplored. Though none should approach except in faith and penitence, it should ever be remembered that the communion is a means of grace, not the reward of goodness on the part of the receiver. Another point to be remembered in personal dealing under this head is this, that our duty only takes us so far. We are bound to see that a credible profession is made with due knowledge, but we are not bound to go further. This is one of the points of difference between the Church and the sect "*de internis non judicat ecclesia*." The Church admits to communion on credible evidence, the sect professes to separate "the wheat from the tares," and so to judge the heart—which is God's

work, not man's. Luther, with his usual manly vigour, broke out on such a practice, "May God preserve us from a Church in which there are none but saints"; while Calvin declared that "it would break up the Church into little sects of a few hypocrites"; and even Rutherford, calmly discussing the matter, says that "there might be a true Church without a true Christian in it." While this is undoubtedly true, it is none the less our duty to do our very utmost to secure that the profession which they are to make shall be absolutely sincere, and that in renewing their baptismal vows they shall consciously and definitely dedicate themselves to God.

It will be found very profitable to devote the last meeting of the class to a full and detailed explanation of the service as used. This is not only helpful to the young communicants in delivering them from much bewilderment during the service, but in enabling them to understand how the different ideas involved in the communion find expression. In a Church where there is no liturgy this is specially important; and this meeting also offers a good opportunity for impressing the necessity for great reverence in the service—both inward and outward, a lesson always needed among us. They should be reminded also—especially now that the custom of simultaneous communion is so common and there is often a long interval of silence—of the

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duty of offering prayers and intercessions privately at the Lord's Table in the communion and fellowship which is there specially granted. Where the time of dispensation is long, it may be helpful to turn to the Sacramental hymns.

I need not say the work of preparation will be incomplete unless the minister privately deals with each intending communicant. This is a part of the work which should not be omitted. Though it is difficult in towns, where the numbers may be large, no one should grudge the labour. Except in special circumstances the interview should be quite brief. The purpose would be served by the minister addressing to each a few words, making personal application of what has been said in the class to their own life, reminding them of the need for personal faith and penitence, of the call upon them to lead a life of holiness, and of the necessity of coming to the Lord's Table in sincerity of heart; then repeating with them the words of the Creed as an act of faith, engaging briefly in prayer, joining with them in the Lord's Prayer and blessing each in the name of the Lord.

When we have accomplished such a course we have done one of the best parts of our ministry, one most likely to tell on the character and destiny of souls. Should it fail, we have at least done what we could.

It is surely fitting that after preparation there

should be a formal and definite act of admission. The beautiful rite of confirmation, with the laying on of hands, which is in use in other branches of the Church, has much to commend it besides its undoubted antiquity.

Confirmation of baptismal vows.

Calvin commended the practice, and wished to see it restored to its pure use. In the Directory—owing, it is said, to opposition in the Assembly—there is no instruction given as to the admission of catechumens, but it has frequently been the subject of recommendation. The First Book of Discipline enjoined that “none are to be admitted to this mystery who cannot formally say the Lord’s Prayer, the articles of the belief, nor declare the sum of the law.” There are indications, also, that the catechumens were carefully instructed; and it is supposed they were formally admitted “at the public examination of the congregation, which was long universal,” and which, according to Sir Henry Moncrieff, was still in practice in some parishes as late as 1818. Henderson describes the practice in his time, and from him we learn that admission was only granted to those who showed “a competent knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion and the doctrine of the sacraments.” The Act of 1706 recommends ministers “to take as strict a trial as can be of such as they admit to the Lord’s Supper, especially before their admission thereto, and that they diligently in-

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struct them" particularly "as to the covenant of grace and the nature and end of that ordinance as a seal thereof, and charge upon their consciences the obligations they lie under from their baptismal covenant, and seriously exhort them to renew the same." The service of admission was generally taken in the presence of the session and those of the congregation who chose to remain. It was practised by many faithful clergymen, but it fell into disuse till it began to be revived in our own time. It is to be hoped it will spread and become universal. The General Assembly's Committee on Public Worship and Sacraments have inserted among their recommendations an order of admission to first communion which is an excellent guide. And the order given in the Euchologion fills up the details. Such a service is a fitting crown to the time of preparation, and will probably, under God's blessing, do much to fix irrevocably in the memory and heart the lessons they have been taught, and to make that first communion to which it is leading them an abiding influence to the very end of their lives.

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HOLY COMMUNION.

“Presbyter in Christi mensa
Quid agis bene pensa.”

THOUGH the holy communion be but rarely administered among us, it is none the less the highest act of Christian worship and the greatest privilege which the ministry enjoys in the exercise of its divine commission. Indeed, rightly regarded, it is, as has been finely said, a “central and supreme act of the Christian ministry, by which it is directly associated in the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ.” For this reason, notwithstanding the rarity of its celebration, if not on that very account, it behoves the earnest minister to make the most careful and thorough preparation, both personal and official, for the worthy and edifying administration of this sacred ordinance. Taking our present system of occasional communions as it stands, whether we think it unsatis-

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factory or not, it is plainly our duty to make the best of it. I do not touch here, therefore, in detail on the desirability of increasing the opportunities of communion,—whether by a return to the undoubted practice of the reformed Church, when it was celebrated at least once a month, or to the clearer and more intelligible custom of celebrating the sacrament on the weekly memorial of the resurrection,—except to mention in passing that the present custom can hardly be consistently defended on the precepts and practice of the Reformers; for while Calvin condemns yearly communion as an *inventum diaboli*, and strongly declares that “each week at least the table of the Lord should be spread,” the Directory enjoins that the communion is to be celebrated frequently, apparently contemplating such frequency as would not require previous intimation.

For practical guidance, however, I take the conditions under which, in existing circumstances, we are called to celebrate this ordinance, with the purpose of calling attention to the immense importance of its practical bearing on the spiritual life of the congregation committed to us in the Lord; and also of its higher aspect as exhibiting the relation in which the congregation, as in all spiritual worship so specially in this, passing beyond the thought of its own needs rises nearer and nearer to the heavenly throne.

There is, no doubt, something to be said from some practical points of view for the less frequent celebration of the communion, inasmuch as it offers at certain periods a definite break in the routine of Church life, and perhaps on this very account recalls the individual to a sense of the need of abiding fellowship in Christ which is apt to become weak or even to die out. I do not mention this, however, as a justification for a practice which seems to be a defect in our Church system founded on no clear principle, and subject to the varying fancies of individuals. But in the absence of any expedient such as that afforded in other branches of the Church by the Christian year and the prominence thus given to the great verities of the faith, as well as the periodic call for special personal thoughtfulness and examination, the occasional communion does serve to some extent this useful purpose. At least it breaks the monotony of ordinary worship, offering its silent but eloquent protest against the tendency, ever besetting us, to forget God.

It would seem, therefore, to be all the more necessary to expend upon it the utmost care. For the minister himself it is fitted to be of the greatest possible value. Times will come in our ministry, unless it be exceptionally blessed or we be exceptionally blind, when, with the sense of failure and unfitness for our task,

**The place
of the
sacrament
in the
minister's
life.**

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we shall deeply need the help of God's Spirit, never denied to earnest prayer. And it is then, also, that we shall welcome the sense of Christ's presence which the holy communion supremely gives. For here above all to His faithful minister He is specially and peculiarly present. In the sacrament we enjoy the companionship of Jesus Christ. But this great gift of spiritual strength cannot possibly be realised without careful personal preparation and watchfulness over the inner life. Such watchfulness will not fail of its reward. As again and again we prepare to stand at His table as the representatives of our Lord, we shall be led to test ourselves and to scrutinise our motives, endeavouring to discern whether personally we are animated by the desire to be more like Him in life, and whether, as His ministers, we are entering into the spirit of His sacrifice. For undoubtedly we fail in the very core of our work and in our most holy service unless we so enter into the spirit of that sacrifice which we commemorate and show forth in the breaking of bread. For this reason, in many ancient services—notably the use of Sarum—the celebrant is enjoined to use in private before entering the church the hymn *Veni Creator* or some similar invocation of the Holy Spirit,—a practice which we might well follow ordinarily, but, above all, before the solemn service of the sacrament. The prayers of preparation ascribed to St Ambrose also beautifully express

this primary need—"that the grace of the Holy Ghost may fill the heart of the earthly minister," as for instance, "Thou didst set this mystery in the might of Thy Holy Spirit"; and again, "Teach me, I beseech Thee, by Thy Holy Spirit," and "Kindle in us the fire of Thy Holy Spirit." And assuredly no other form of devotion could be more in harmony with the language of the ancient liturgies and with the true idea of the ministerial office. For in order to celebrate worthily the sacred memorial of His sacrifice once made, and for ever presented in Heaven, we must in our measure "have the same mind which is in the great High Priest who is Himself the Victim." In short, the spirit of the sacrifice is the spirit in which, as ministers of Christ, we should approach His table and act in His name.

This is all the more evident when we proceed to consider the deeper meanings of the sacrament, not stopping short at its fitness for individual edification but regarding it as a high and solemn act of worship, in which, "touching and handling things unseen," we show forth the Lord's death, and plead before the Father that sacrifice once made upon the Cross. Avoiding on the one hand errors which have minimised, and on the other errors which have exaggerated and distorted, the spiritual truth and reality of which the sacrament is the symbolical representation—for that purpose appointed and chosen by Christ

Deeper
meanings
of the
sacra-
ment.

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—we may well retain in harmony with what for the first thousand years was practically the unbroken faith of Christendom—however obscured with superstitious accretions,—the firm and confident assurance that in the sacrament, rightly and duly administered, we do not deal with bare and empty signs, but what the Lord signifieth thereby He also performs to His faithful people. The reality which we commemorate and show forth is the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. This aspect of the sacrament is carefully stated in the words of our own Standards: “In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to His Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or dead, but only a commemoration of that one offering up of Himself upon the Cross, once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same.” In this and other statements the Church shows her “rightful and proper jealousy that nothing should seem to overshadow, or interfere with, or supplement the meritoriousness of the one sacrifice of our dear Lord upon the Cross.”

It is our duty, therefore, as called to administer this ordinance, to keep clear on the one hand of an error which would emasculate the sacrament and reduce it to a meaningless rite, and on the other, of the opposite error, which would overload it with a meaning never intended and verging always to

wanton superstition and confusion. Between the two extremes we have within the teaching of the Church a view of the sacrament as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice and a means of communion with Him till He come again.

Not, however, for reasons of doctrine do I make these remarks, but for this practical purpose to which I again revert, that such being the high spiritual aim of the ordinance, it not only demands of us as ministers and "stewards of the mysteries" of God very searching personal examination, that we ourselves may not miss the edification it is intended to afford, but very earnest and painstaking preparation, that as Christ's representatives acting in His name we may so render the service that His people may be enabled devoutly and intelligently to take their part in that spiritual "oblation of all possible praise" which must always form its centre and crown; and that they may be in every way helped and prepared in mind and heart worthily to receive the sacred elements, and, in the fullest sense of those profound words, be made "by faith partakers of His body and blood to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

No part of our pastoral duty is of greater importance than this, and none, I believe, will more powerfully influence our people, if faithfully and earnestly carried out with all the intensity of our spiritual being.

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There are several lines of preparation which may be indicated.

1. *Personal preparation*.—Of this I shall only say a few words. It will naturally be a deeper and more

**Personal
prepara-
tion.** intense exercise of the same kind as that required for the ordinary worship of the

sanctuary. In a very real sense we are to enter the holy of holies; we are to lead our people to God in the most sacred of His ordinances. No man can go to such a high and holy duty with a light heart, except from absolute thoughtlessness or secret disbelief. Even on the lowest view of the sacrament such a disposition is impossible for any right-minded and thoughtful minister. It will be our duty to "place ourselves in the presence of God" in the most complete sense of that ancient devotional phrase; to endeavour to realise with the utmost clearness that we are about to engage in the highest act to which our ministry calls us; to pray earnestly for light and guidance; to steep our whole soul in the thoughts and feelings which the sacrament expresses and calls forth; and, in the light of these, with care, humility, and thoroughness to examine our own consciences and so open our hearts to God, beseeching Him to make us, by His Spirit, fitting instruments, "with fear and reverence, to undertake the holy ministry of His name."

All this when stated is very obvious; but it may

be doubted whether in our ministry we pay sufficient regard to it. The true secret of failure in the devout and edifying rendering of divine service, and especially of holy communion, is often to be sought in the want of personal preparation on the part of the minister. We are tempted to take it as a mere matter of course, and in consequence we remain largely outside of it, to our own great loss as well as that of our people.

For every service, but particularly for Holy Communion, no minister ought to dispense with at least a brief time of private communion with God. "St Augustine," says Dr Liddon, "held meditation to be a necessary preparation for all prayer; but it must be peculiarly so for a due discharge of that august worship, compared with which the intensest and lowliest prayer is but an earthly familiarity. At least ten minutes or a quarter of an hour—independently of any more formal preparatory office or needful examination of conscience—should be spent by the celebrant, alone with God, in such earnest and confident colloquy as the practice of meditation will have rendered easy and delightful,—a time in which to pass in review the many who hang on his intercession; in which to offer himself and his offering to the divine Glory; in which to concentrate all the powers of his soul for an act at which, as St Chrysostom says, 'attendant angels tremble, and which thrills irresistibly through the

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courts and ranks of heaven up to the very throne of God.'"¹

2. But in addition to this special personal preparation, always necessary, there is also an official preparation no less necessary, and which should be continuous and lifelong. It will be our duty to study carefully the Scriptural teaching on the sacrament, and to celebrate the ordinance in the spirit of the institution. It will further be our duty to study carefully the doctrinal aspects of the Holy Communion (which are properly no part of my subject here); and also most earnestly to endeavour, by devout meditation and careful investigation of the history of the administration of the ordinance, to understand its rendering throughout the Church, so that our own administration of the service may be based not on passing fancies, but may be guided by sound and true principles, and enriched where possible by the devotional traditions of the best ages of Christian worship.

In the actual rendering of the service everything will be subordinated to the one "great aim of drawing near as one body to the Father through the perfect sacrifice of the Son; to receive from Him the gift, through His appointed pledges, of eternal life in His Son and fellowship with Him through fellowship one with another."

¹ Clerical Life and Work, p. 38.

On the other hand, while all is subordinated to the main purpose, nothing that interferes with it or does not contribute to it should be tolerated. This does not mean that apparent trifles are not to be considered; for again, as was said in regard to ordinary worship, so here especially it is true, nothing is too small to be considered if it either hinders or helps. "There is no doubt," to quote the words of an experienced clergyman, "that habitual attention even to apparently trifling details in the conduct of the service has a great influence in promoting devotion,"¹ both in minister and people. And certainly it is no sign of spirituality to neglect anything that appertains to the worship of God in His own ordinance.

Above all, from the very beginning of the service, and throughout, we are to remember that though we are the ministers of the sacrament we are identified with the congregation which, with us, is approaching God through Christ. We are acting in the name of our fellow-worshippers; we are offering with them the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, pleading with them, and not merely for them, the one offering. "The devout minister, by his very method of celebrating the holy mysteries, will elevate the devotion, instruct the ignorance, and warm the hearts of those who communicate with him; yet, on the other hand, he may only

¹ Ellerton, in *Manual of Parochial Work*, p. 65.

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too easily annoy, distract, and repel them, and so actually put a stumbling-block in the way of their profitable reception of God's gifts by novel or unaccustomed additions to the service as known to them."

3. This brings us to a practical point towards which these previous considerations have been leading. In order that the congregation may be truly edified and miss no part of the spiritual blessing of the sacrament, it will be necessary that the service be so ordered that they may readily and with instant devotion enter into each part of it. For this end it will also be necessary not merely to adopt a form of service ready to hand, but, if such a service should be adopted, to master the *rationale* of it, and even to take fitting opportunity to explain it in detail to the people.

At present it is not possible to point to any order of service which can claim more than the shadow of authority. The Directory remains, and its slender outline is at least sufficient to guide us. It ought, however, to be supplemented by careful study of the *rationale* of the communion service, of the ideas underlying it which demand expression, and also by a systematic and discriminating study of the historical liturgies in which, with varying degrees of doctrinal difference, these ideas have found utterance. Such a study will alone serve to impress upon us the greatness and dignity of the

Need for
clear order
in the
service.

office. It does not seem fitting that any minister should remain in ignorance of the main features of the eucharistic service which has been characteristic of the historic worship of the Church. When one considers that to this day, in spite of all the divisions which have destroyed the peace of the Church, there are common and invariable elements which mark the celebration of the holy sacrament under every variety of ritual, from the most bald and simple to the most elaborate and complete, one sees that it is necessary to correct the narrowing tendencies of local or even national customs by wider study, no less than to check ritualistic licence by the careful observance of our own national limits. While, then, we are bound to study our specially national guides—in particular the Directory, as well as the Book of Common Order and the Reformed liturgies—it will be very helpful to gain at least a general idea of the development of the eucharistic service through the various families of liturgies which have come down to us, and of which the types are still extant, some of them in actual use. The words of the institution—"This do . . .," "Take, eat . . .," "He blessed . . .," "He gave thanks," &c.—constitute in themselves the germ of all liturgies. Around these acts and words "all subsequent prayers, praises, and ritual customs have gathered" and "the history of these is the history of liturgies."

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There can be little doubt that the apostles would have some kind of common method of administering the sacrament; and there can be as little **Historic** doubt that from very early times a common **liturgies.** form, with local or national varieties, has been in use. Not only have the parts been fixed, but, generally speaking, the order of the parts. "Certain elements have always been included, and with little exception these have succeeded each other in a determined and logical sequence, and with certain invariable formulas."¹ With this uniformity there has also been great diversity. Probably from the very first this may have been due to the individual influence of the apostles. We have at least families of liturgies claiming this apostolic or quasi-apostolic origin. The four, or perhaps five, distinct forms which emerge from the apostolic tradition are severally known as the liturgy of St James, St Mark, St Peter, St John, and St Thadæus. The first is the type from which the liturgy of the Eastern Church developed; the second grew into the present liturgy of Egypt; the third into the Ambrosian liturgy and the present Roman use; the fourth into the Mozarabic—and probably, as some think, into the primitive British liturgies; while the fifth is represented by the Nestorian liturgies.

The most typical of these liturgies is that of St James, which, though no longer the use of any exist-

¹ Wotherspoon, *The Divine Service*.

ing Church, is said on some of the Greek islands
Common on the festival of the saint. Even there
elements the order is, in the main, identical with
in all that which characterises Churches main-
liturgies. taining "a continuity of practice from their founda-
tion, such as the Greek orthodox, the Coptic, the
Chaldaic, the Syrian, the Latin."¹ In other liturgies
which have ceased to be used—such as the Celtic,
African, and that of Malabar—the same general
order was followed. From the very earliest descrip-
tions in the Didache and in the well-known passage
of Justin Martyr to the latest development of each
part of the service in the typical liturgies of the
East and West, there is a continuity of devotional
expansion, the rich flowering of a liturgical growth,
which is of immense interest as showing the develop-
ment of the idea of worship ever centring in the
eucharist. Already, in the third century, as shown
in the Clementine constitutions, we find all the
main elements which characterise the historical
services—the salutation, the Sursum Corda, the
eucharistic prayer, the Ter Sanctus, the consecra-
tion, the great intercession in which the commem-
oration culminated; then the Sancta Sanctis, fol-
lowed by the distribution of the elements, the
prayer of thanksgiving, benediction, and dismissal.
To this outline was added in 471 the Creed, which
was repeated before the consecration prayers.

¹ Wotherspoon, *The Divine Service*.

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In the group of liturgies representing the practice of the Eastern Church we have a representation of the service at a later though still comparatively early period, and here the same general outline prevails. There is the usual dismissal of the catechumens, after which the eucharistic service begins—the introductory or pro-anaphoral part including “the great entrance” (corresponding in some ways to the “bringing in of the Elements”), the offertory, the kiss of peace, and the Creed. Then follow the directly eucharistic prayers, including the preface, triumphal hymn, commemoration of the work of redemption and of the institution, the invocation of the Spirit and prayer of consecration, the great intercession, with the Lord’s Prayer. Here, again, the commemoration culminates and we pass to the individual reception, first by a prayer of intense adoration, then the Sancta Sanctis, communion, thanksgiving, and dismissal.

Passing from East to West, we find the same general idea pervading the whole service, with, of course, variations and additions but most striking harmony throughout. After the Nicene Creed and offertory there is the introductory service, in which the bread and wine are offered to God in prayer; then the eucharistic prayers, with the usual salutation and response, Sursum Corda, Sanctus, and variant prefaces. These again

are followed by the consecration, oblation, and intercession, in which once more the commemoration culminates. The communion follows—mutilated for the people by the withholding of the cup. The post-communion prayers and benediction conclude the service.

The services of the Church as reformed are of special interest. In the old French and Genevan

**Reformed
orders of
service.**

order we return to a simplicity approaching the custom of the time described by Justin Martyr. Following the Lord's Prayer, which had ended the ordinary service, there came the words of the institution and exhortation, the post-communion prayer of thanksgiving being followed by the Nunc Dimittis and benediction.

In "the manner of the administration of the Lord's Supper" (in Knox's Liturgy so called) the order is similar to the Geneva order. The service begins after the recital of the Creed, at the close of the ordinary prayer following upon the sermon; then follow the institution, exhortation, eucharistic prayer, distribution of the Elements, prayer, Psalm ciii., and blessing.

The Book of Common Prayer, compiled with many revisions from pre-Reformation service-books, and now for three centuries in use throughout the Anglican communion, is perhaps to English-speaking Christians the most interesting of all existing

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liturgies, inasmuch as it retains the historic elements of the communion service without perpetuating doctrinal errors. In its historic setting, as well as for the devotional elements which it contains, it is eminently deserving of thorough and exhaustive study. Indeed there is perhaps no better introduction to the wide field of liturgiology than an analysis of its services, and especially of the communion. The communion office is not free from certain defects in arrangement which its most attached admirers would prefer to see altered, but it is a marvellously beautiful and satisfying service; and though neither perfection nor finality may be claimed for it, it is certainly deserving of the highest respect as "a national rite which has commended itself to the conscience of devout Englishmen"¹ for over three hundred years.

I have given this rapid summary of the typical liturgies with the purpose of emphasising what I have repeatedly felt—that it is unbecoming to approach the administration of this sacred service without being at some pains to know what the history of its use has been in the Church, why various customs have arisen, and why they have been discarded; and because in the study of these liturgies, even in their barest outlines, much devotional help may be gathered for the edifying

¹ Cf. Swete, *Services and Service-Books before the Reformation*, p. 121.

administration of the ordinance. On account of certain doctrinal differences it seems absurd to throw away some of the best traditions of Christian worship. We may surely be truly national without ceasing to be truly catholic. It is, however, only as aids to the expression of the ideas involved in the communion that these ancient and venerable forms can be of real service to us. And one main use is to gather from a *rationale* of these services the fundamental ideas which, amid all divergences of doctrine and ritual, the holy sacrament has endeavoured to express—viz., the commemoration and pleading of Christ's sacrifice in the communion of His body and blood.

In the actual administration of the sacrament there is at present great variety of usage. All authority is in a state of suspended animation. Whatever shadow of it remains is to be found in the Directory, but it is only a shadow. In the recent Report on Worship and Sacraments only a general order is suggested with no indication of details. For the sake of illustration, therefore, I shall take the order given in the Euchologion, which is at least in harmony with the recommendations of the Directory and consistent with our national traditions, though enriched by materials drawn from the ancient services. I do so not because this order is to be regarded as in all respects satisfactory, but

Variety in
present
usage.

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inasmuch as it represents not merely individual peculiarities but a certain general agreement within the Church, and has therefore a claim to our consideration. This claim is strengthened by the fact that for some years past it has been used at the celebration of the sacrament during the meeting of the highest court of the Church.

This order may be divided, according to the ancient practice, into the pro-anaphora and the anaphora—the first part consisting of the ordinary morning service up to the sermon and succeeding hymn, after which follow the exhortation, offering, hymn, and bringing in of the Elements. Then comes the communion service proper: the salutation, the institution, the address, the setting apart of the Elements, the Creed, the prayer of humble access, the Sursum Corda, the eucharistic prayer, the triumphal hymn, the invocation, and the Lord's Prayer; after which follow the action and the communion, the peace, the bidding to thanksgiving, the prayer of thanks and self-dedication, intercessions for the Church militant and thanksgivings for the Church triumphant, and the final benediction.

Since I propose only to deal with this outline as far as it bears on the administration of the sacrament itself, I may make this one observation, that (especially when the congregation have been previously addressed on the

Analysis
of com-
munion
service.

meaning of the ordinance and its place in our religious life as well as in the general worship of the Church) it will be found most suitable to make the sermon quite brief and more devotional than usual, and also, that it will be felt better to reserve the prayers of intercession and thanksgiving till they can be offered at the holy table.

Presuming that up to this point the service has been rendered, we begin with the address or exhortation.

The object of this exhortation is to set forth the benefits conferred by the holy ordinance, the neces-

The
exhorta-
tion.

sity of coming to it with right dispositions, and the danger of partaking unworthily.

It came to be known as the "fencing of the table," and was carried to great lengths in the way of debarring. But "the language of exclusion in the Directory is much less strict than in the Common Order." It is, indeed, properly to be regarded as an invitation, and should always be delivered in that spirit, gravely reminding the people of the danger of deliberate sin as a barrier to worthy reception, but tenderly recalling to them the promises of grace through the ordinance, assuring them, in the name of Christ, "of ease, refreshing, and strength to their weak and wearied souls." Indeed the burden of it should be, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is customary to close

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this exhortation with the historic phrase "Sancta Sanctis"—"holy things for holy persons"—which is itself a summary of the spirit of the address.

Following the exhortation comes the characteristic rite of the bringing in of the Elements, corresponding, according to some, to what is known as the Great Entrance in the Eastern Office, usually accompanied by the singing on the part of the congregation of Paraphrase xxxv. I believe that Psalm xxiv. was occasionally used at this point, a practice for which a parallel may be found in the Armenian liturgy.

The Elements having been placed on the holy table, the minister, standing at the table, salutes the people with the apostolic words, "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all," a feature which marks all the liturgies—this particular form occurring in the liturgy of Constantinople. This is the true beginning of the service. It begins, as it ends, with the blessing of peace.

Then comes the question as to the authority by which the ordinance is administered, which calls for and explains the reading at this point of the words of the institution, with the dignified preface, "Beloved in the Lord, attend to the words of the institution of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ as they are delivered by

the holy apostle Paul.” In the Directory the minister is left free to read from the evangelists; but in the First Book of Discipline the passage from 1 Corinthians is described as “the perfect form,” and has always been used in Scotland.

In the Directory, again, the minister is left free to explain and apply the words of the institution as he “seeth requisite.” This optional direction has been amply taken advantage of in the past—so much so, perhaps, as to overload the service and throw it entirely out of proportion. The use of such an address very much depends on the amount of instruction which the minister is in the habit of giving to his people in regard to the communion. In any case it should be brief, and rather of the nature of a meditation, devotional more than homiletic. And in many cases it will be felt to be unnecessary. In the historic liturgies it is quite unusual—with the exception of the Malabar liturgy; and even when brief and most appropriate it can well be spared with a carefully instructed people.

Following the address, should it be used, comes the action known as setting apart the Elements,
“Setting
apart
the Ele-
ments.” otherwise common, to the holy use and mystery for which our Saviour has appointed them. The words used in the Directory are, that “the minister is to begin the action with sanctifying and blessing the Elements

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of bread and wine set before him." And the mode in which this is done in the service with which we are dealing is very simple. The minister, while taking the bread and the cup into his hand, simply says, "As the Lord Jesus the night in which He was betrayed took bread, I take these Elements to be set apart to the holy use and mystery for which He has appointed them. . . . And as He gave thanks and blessed, let us now draw near to the throne of Grace and present to God our prayers and thanksgivings."

The setting apart of the Elements is followed by a prayer consisting of the Creed as an act of faith, **Profession of faith.** confession of sin, the eucharistic prayer, and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, followed by the Lord's Prayer. Some may find a difficulty in using the Creed at this part of the Service. In most liturgies it occurs in the pro-anaphora; and the reason given by Symeon of Thessalonica, commenting on the position of the Creed in the liturgy of St Chrysostom, seems sufficient: "We must first make a true and sincere confession about the Lord, before we can behold Him without any veil." A simpler and more natural method is to use the Creed before the actual communion service begins, and to follow the institution by short prayers in which the Elements are brought before God to be used for His ends, we dedicate ourselves to Him and beseech Him to

accept us, approaching by the new and living way; then proceeding to the *Sursum Corda* and eucharistic prayer, under which is comprised the thanksgiving for the blessings of creation and redemption, the consecration, the memorial of the one sacrifice, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the great intercession—in which remembrance is made of the living and the dead,—this being followed by a prayer of humble access and the Lord's Prayer; after which the Elements are dispensed, the communicants received, prayers of thanksgiving are offered, the psalm of praise is sung, and the blessing is said. Thus the commemorative and the receptive parts of the service are more clearly brought out.

But returning to the order with which we are dealing, let us see its inner meaning. From the Creed to the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer there are, as I have said, four distinct spiritual acts: (1) profession of faith, (2) prayer of access, (3) the eucharistic prayer, (4) invocation and Lord's Prayer.

In the profession of faith—whether uttered with the congregation or embodied in the prayer—we
Prayer of access. make an act of faith and unite ourselves with the whole Church of God, solemnly declaring our belief in Him and in the great verities of the faith. Having thus declared our belief, we realise our shortcomings and our need of pardon. There can be only one desire, and it finds expression :
“O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of

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the world, have mercy upon us. . . . Grant us Thy peace." But when our hearts are bowed in lowliest penitence there come to us the words which have sounded through the service of the Church since her earliest days: "Lift up your hearts!"

**Euchar-
istic
prayer.**

We lift them up unto the Lord. In those words of solemn beauty, which are found in all liturgies, we are summoned to join in the great thanksgiving: "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is called technically the preface, and is an enumeration of the grounds of thankfulness, leading up to the glorious angelic hymn in which we are called to join with angels and archangels and all the hosts of heaven—Holy, Holy, Holy!

Finally there comes the invocation of the Spirit and the solemn memorial of the sacrifice of Christ,

**Invoca-
tion.**

in which we ask God to grant His holy Spirit, and so to sanctify the Elements, both of bread and wine—that the bread which we break may be the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing which we bless the communion of the blood of Christ. This part of the prayer, it need hardly be said, is the climax of the great spiritual act in which we are engaged, and ought to be rendered with the greatest possible reverence of manner and tone. It is, indeed, "the

central and essential prayer" of the whole service. As is well known, it has been a subject of division between the East and the West—the Eastern liturgies invariably containing such a prayer, the Western (Roman and English) being without it. The want of it is defended on the ground that the words of the institution are sufficient, Christ having offered only a prayer of thanksgiving. This is probably an afterthought to explain a custom which had insensibly arisen; for it is asserted, on the other hand, that it was in early times considered the chief part of the service both in the East and West, but being said in secret it fell out of use. It seems clear that the prayer of invocation is according to primitive custom, and it is certainly according to our Scottish teaching and tradition: "the Elements are"—in the words of the Directory—"sanctified by the Word and prayer." The words of the institution and the prayer of invocation are effectual in rendering them fit to be instruments by which Christ's body and blood are imparted to the faithful. Less than this we cannot, in consistency with our standards, say. More than this we cannot say: "The body and blood of Christ are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver no less truly and really than the Elements themselves are to the outward senses." They are truly bread and truly wine; yet they are consecrated to a holy use. Something less than material change we see, some-

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thing higher than symbol—even seal as well as sign—“This is My body,” “This is My blood.”

According to a custom which has probably come down to us from the days of the apostles, the prayer **The Lord's Prayer.** of invocation is followed by the Lord's Prayer. Prayer, with which, as St Augustine says, “almost every Church concludes the canon.” It is a great help when it can be said by minister and people together, all consciously drawing near in the filial spirit to the table of the Lord where they are to receive the heavenly bread.

Then follows what has always been called “the action”—a part of the service which it is par-

“**The action.**” ticularly necessary to perform with care. As it is one of the duties of the devout communicant, according to our Catechism, “diligently to observe the sacramental Elements and actions,” it is none the less the duty of the celebrant so to administer as most powerfully to affect the worshippers with the spiritual realities underlying the same. The action includes the fraction and the delivery of the Elements, and consummates the entire act of communion.

In the rubrics given in the present order the Directory is closely followed, except that the words are sometimes in the form of a prayer, a method common to all historic liturgies, and implied in Gillespie's account, where the form is given with the variation “as we also give thanks to God who

gave His Son to die. . . . As we also give thanks to God who gave His Son to shed His blood for us.” This is important, as bringing out more explicitly that “the showing forth of Christ’s death is an act towards God.”

There is first the taking of the bread now consecrated; then the assertion that this is done as Christ originally took the bread, giving thanks; then the fraction which represents “not only our Lord’s action while instituting the Supper, but also His death and passion;” then the reception by the minister himself, and lastly, the distribution to the people in the identical words of the institution. Then after a suitable pause the taking of the cup, the reception by the minister, and the distribution to the people, again in the identical words of Scripture. When all have partaken the minister is enjoined to say, “The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

Then follows an exhortation to thanksgiving, which is, and always should be, brief.

The prayers of thanksgiving and intercessions follow. The latter, in all early liturgies as well as in the reformed Book of Common Order, occur earlier in the service, usually associated with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the actual pleading of Christ’s sacrifice, but general practice has included it in the last prayer. A practical reason for using it earlier may be found in the fact, which

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many have experienced, that it is not desirable to prolong the service after the communicants have partaken of the Elements.

The concluding hymn of praise suggested is the Song of Simeon, *Nunc Dimittis*, or the Gloria in Excelsis; but Psalm ciii. is familiar to our people, and admirably suited to express the devout feelings appropriate to the close of the solemn service, and preparing all for the benediction which at such a time should fall more sweetly and tenderly on the waiting soul.

The foregoing analysis has been given not because the order is felt to be ideally perfect, but because it is at least better than anything else we have, and because it forms a basis from which to make practical suggestions. **Purpose of the foregoing analysis.** Whatever order is adopted we should see that it is constructed upon a principle, and that everything is subjected to the main purpose. We should also endeavour to realise the various parts of the great spiritual act in which we are engaged. There is one supreme idea to be expressed—the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice in the communion of His body and blood. For the fulfilment of this certain positive actions and certain material elements are prescribed. With these are to be combined other spiritual exercises. The practical question is how to combine and arrange them so as most effectually to realise the intention of our Lord in His own

ordinance, and to edify the people. With many varieties in order, there may be wonderful unanimity of result. Yet it is no justification for our own carelessness, even though we cannot believe that the blessing is missed by any sincere worshipper through imperfection on our part. The divine service should, above all things, be simple; but simplicity is not the result of incoherence. It is the result, here as always, of thoughtfulness, care, and true reverence, and in the order which we have been studying there is a continuous movement, which is certainly conducive to intelligent worship.

The people are bidden draw near; the Elements to be used for the sacred purpose are solemnly placed on the Lord's table; the minister salutes the people in the name of the Lord; the warrant for the service is read, and the Elements are set apart to be used of God; the faith in which the service is celebrated is solemnly declared; the sin and unworthiness of the worshippers is confessed and pardon is sought; the hearts of all are uplifted in thanksgiving and adoration of God Almighty; the Holy Spirit is invoked to sanctify the Elements of bread and wine; the commemoration is made of Christ's offering of Himself on the Cross—once for all; the Lord's Prayer is said; the sacred Elements are distributed, by which the faithful receive Christ; in the consciousness of that living union prayers of thanksgiving, self-dedication, and intercession are

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offered; the hymn of praise is sung; and the blessing of Almighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—is solemnly pronounced.

Here is a logical and consistent series of spiritual actions which can be easily explained to the people, and which, even without explanation, tell their own story. The ideas underlying the service are brought vividly out, and the great aim of the sacrament is attained—the showing forth of Christ's death, the spiritual oblation of all possible praise, the reception of Christ, and the solemn testimony and witness for Him before God and before all the world. Whatever order, then, is adopted, let us make sure that it is spiritually complete and coherent; for otherwise our people, consciously or unconsciously, will be unable to follow and will miss much. But let us not be led away by fancies of our own; above all, let us not confuse the minds of our people by introducing merely fanciful elements, which do not help the main purpose of the service.

It is scarcely necessary to point out what an added interest will be given to the administration of the sacrament when it is seen and felt to be conducted on a well-considered, duly balanced, and plainly devotional plan, with every attempt to suppress self-consciousness, and to encourage on the part of all that intense devotion which should mark the holiest act of our religion, and which is the

secret of the joy which the sincere worshipper experiences.

I have said nothing of the table addresses which were a great feature in communion services in a past generation, and which still prevail.

Com-
munion
addresses.

While it is certain that no more delightful exercise of the ministry of the Word can be conceived, it is exposed to several risks. It has always tended to undue prolixity, and is liable to strike a jarring note. No work should be done with greater care; and the address, when given, should be more a meditation than a formal appeal to the communicants. And I have already said, when we do our duty in our regular ministration, and prepare our people to regard the sacrament aright and to approach it in a right spirit, such addresses, except of the very briefest, should not be necessary. In any case, the words should be few and mainly scriptural. It is a time for God to speak and man to listen.

I have said a good deal in this chapter upon the necessity of preparation. In fact, that has been my main purpose; and the preparation should be lifelong, for we should never approach the service without premeditation. But there is special need for this in the beginning of our ministry. Till it becomes a practical matter, many of us pay no attention to it. The consequence is, that the first time we are called upon to administer the sacrament

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we do so in a state of agitation and uncertainty, which is often very distressing. It is surely wise, then, not merely to take every opportunity of studying the subject and observing the whole service, but also, when the time comes, to prepare carefully the entire matter of the service we are to use in all its parts, and whatever be our future practice, to have at least the central and essential parts clearly before us, so that there may be not even the slightest risk of stumbling or confusion. It is a vain thing to imagine that the conduct of such a service, where every word and act should be exact and careful, may be left to the inspiration of the moment.

A still more important point upon which I have incidentally spoken is the necessity of connecting the celebration of the communion, rare as it is at present among us, with the daily religious life of our people. And when we come to deal with this as a practical matter we may probably realise, as we cannot beforehand, what a great power the recurring communion may be. As was said above, it at least accentuates the necessity of spiritual progress, and calls for periodic examination. This is a real advantage, and should be well used.

The present state of chaos in the celebration of holy communion, when every man appears to do what seemeth good in his own eyes, and when sometimes from thoughtlessness or want of knowledge essential parts of the

Need of an
authorised
order.

ordinance are omitted altogether, is far from satisfactory. It may be earnestly hoped that in the not far distant future an order for the due administration of this sacred ordinance may receive at least the general sanction of the Church; an order which shall be at once national and catholic, true to the best traditions of Christian history. Till then it is a plain duty to honour this beautiful and touching rite—so venerable in its origin, so lofty in its purpose—by guarding it, as far as we may, from corruption or neglect; neither loading it with meaningless or alien ritual nor robbing it of its due solemnity, but preserving its dignified simplicity and endeavouring to give to it a form worthy of its place in the Church's worship, and of its influence over the Church's life.

THE MINISTRY OF LIFE.

"Vita clerici est Evangelium populi."

IN the preceding chapters I have merely touched the fringe of a great subject. The work of the Christian ministry is too manifold and far reaching to be exhaustively dealt with in so short a space, and therefore I have confined myself to some of its great outstanding features. I have tried to describe some of its ideals, and to show the greatness and dignity of each. We are called to preach the Word of God for the salvation of souls; we are called to administer the worship of the sanctuary for the edification of the body of Christ; we are called to celebrate the holy sacraments and to be the ministers of God's grace to men. For the great work implied in this threefold service no preparation can be too thorough and severe. Every hour of honest study, every bit of intellectual work strenuously done, will tell for good in our future career. To this end, the work done at the university and the work done in the divinity hall is a most necessary and indispensable preparation. For pas-

toral theology, after all, is simply dogmatic theology applied to the cure of souls, and a pastor without a thorough background of divine knowledge as well as intellectual training will fall far short of his ideals.

But there is another form of the ministry to which I have not yet referred, and which I have ventured to call the Ministry of Life. The phrase is perhaps somewhat vague, and is certainly capable of a variety of meanings; but the sense in which I use it is perfectly simple and definite. I mean that entire impression which a minister will make through his personal character, by the whole course of his walk and conversation; that impression by which every form of his work will be judged, and to which it will largely owe whatever power for good it may possess. Rightly or wrongly, the world sets up a standard by which the ministry is to be judged, and it is therefore specially incumbent on the minister of Christ to take heed to himself, as well as to the doctrine. The very nature of his office and calling demands from him special care.

It may be that when we are engaged in actual work our minds revert in pleasant remembrance to the years we spent at the divinity hall, when pastoral duties were as yet unknown, when the joy or the bane of one's life was to dig for Hebrew roots or thread the mazes of ecclesiastical history, to wrestle with the synoptic problem, or to follow,

afar off, the deep researches of the professor of divinity. For two sessions, or perhaps more, so the time sped. It was the pleasure of the hunt, the joy of research, the wonderful charm of what seems to many the driest and most abstract study. Formulas, manuscripts, Hebrew points,—around everything there was a halo which still had power to charm us, and the far-off actualities of ministerial work seemed faint and hazy in the dim and distant future. Meanwhile, friendships ripened and strengthened; the seeds of lifelong fellowship were sown. As we came on into the last session things began to be more and more strenuous; the halo visibly contracted. Not that studies had lost their interest or lectures their power, but there was a sense of something undefined, “a presence that would not be put by,” for by the end of these months we would be “out,” as it is called—out of these hospitable surroundings into that dreary and unknown realm where election committees reign supreme and parishes are dangled, Tantalus-like, before the eager licentiate’s longing gaze.

It was then that there began to dawn upon us, with greater distinctness than ever before, that aspect of the work to which we were looking forward, and of which, perhaps, we had thought least. Away from the routine studies, to which for many years custom had bound us, we stood waiting for the call to service. And

The
ministry
a lifelong
service.

what would that call mean, when it did come? It would mean a ministry of life. It would mean that through every part of our official duty there should be seen and felt the transparent honesty of a clear purpose; that for the sake of this high work of the care of souls we should give ourselves without reserve, that our ministry might in all respects be a true outflowing from what we are,—not an occupation which we could lay aside, but an all-absorbing devotion, a lifelong service.

It is to this aspect of the ministry that I now wish to call attention, with the hope of pointing out some characteristics of the pastoral life which are essential to real success. We are called to minister in a time of intellectual difficulty and social unrest. Indeed, apart from those periods of outward persecution in which the Christian ministry has been nobly exercised in the face of danger and death, there has perhaps been no period in the history of the Church when, for its effective fulfilment, that ministry has had to contend with greater obstacles, intellectual and moral. There is not the same acceptance of the position and calling of the minister of Christ as there was wont to be. "If, therefore, we would do good among men, and set forward the salvation of their souls in spite of prejudice and estrangement, it is obvious that we must seek elsewhere that authoritative prestige without which our words will be fruit-

less, our ministry ineffective." On the ministry of life depends, humanly speaking, the success of all other forms of our work. So true is the old saying, "*Vita clerici est evangelium populi.*" A pastor whose life is not in his work can never be a true pastor, for "the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." His question will never be, "With how little can I get through?" but "How much can I do?" It is therefore, before all things, necessary to see to it that the spring and source of our ministry in life is kept fresh and pure, otherwise all else will be tainted. As we enter on the work, should our first thought be as to how we shall compose our sermons or how we shall render the divine service? Both duties are high, but there is a higher: "Take heed to thyself."

Now the first thing to be said is this, if we are to be true ministers we must be men of prayer:

**Duty of
personal
prayer.**

it is needless to hope for success on any other foundation. We might as well attempt to rear a stable pyramid on the shifting waves of the sea. A prayerless ministry is a mere ploughing of the sands. I do not say that without it we may not attain a certain personal success; we may even become popular preachers, but we shall never be real ministers of Christ. In a time like our own this is especially true, and necessary to be said. We are in danger of being swamped by outward activities. During

the last twenty or thirty years the varieties of practical work to which a minister is expected to devote his strength have largely increased. This is doubtless a matter for great thankfulness, but it brings with it many dangers to the personal life of the minister. As one of the saintliest servants of the Church in France—Henri Perreyve—has said, “We shall never become useful ministers of the Gospel by multiplying our surface efforts or by accumulating good works; that can only be done through the mighty power of a humble heart which leans on God, of a thoughtful soul which drinks deep of Him.”¹

This habit of prayer is, first of all, a personal duty, for we have each a soul to be saved and a life to live, no less than the people who may be committed to us. But it is also a part of our sacred office. We are ordained not to preach only, but to pray; for the ministry is a ministry from God to man, and to God for man. Nothing ought to be allowed to displace this first duty. From the very beginning of our work the devotional habit should be deliberately cultivated, for in no other way can we hope to counteract the prayerless habits of our people. As Frederick Maurice has pointed out, our Lord, in the institution of a Christian ministry, has distinctly indicated the true order of training and of work: “He ordained twelve, that

¹ See Gratry's Life of Henry Perreyve.

they should be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach.”¹ It is only because we have been “with Him” that we have any right to go forth to preach. If we are to exercise our ministry aright, it must flow like a beneficent stream from this hidden spring in our personal life. We must find time for it, or confess that we are neglecting our duty. It is the unfailing stamp of the apostolic office. “We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the Word.”

Perhaps the secret of slackness and failure in the work of the ministry is to be found in not having a fixed time for prayer, however short. It is a simple rule, but important and even vital. Without this fixed time prayer will often be omitted, and not seldom will it be careless and formal.

Be it remembered, also, that our prayer is the prayer of a minister of Christ for his people; for we are to be *legati a latere Jesu Christi*—
Private we are to be *legati a latere Jesu Christi*—
prayer for ambassadors from the side of Jesus Christ.
our people.

We should therefore practise what has been called “the examination of prevision.” It was General Gordon’s habit to commend to God in the morning all persons, known or unknown, whom he was to meet that day; consequently he tells us that even those whom he had never seen did not seem to be strangers when he met them, for he had seen them before “in God.” Nothing

¹ Kingdom of Christ, vol. ii. p. 148.

could be more appropriate for the minister of Christ than to pray daily for those especially to whom he shall minister. One of the most beautiful passages in the 'Serious Call' of William Law exhibits the gradual influence of intercession on the part of the ministry for the flock committed to us.¹ As was pointed out in a previous chapter, the public devotions in the Church should always have a background in private prayer. For such a ministry—because it is a real ministry towards God—one of the most helpful of all books is the devotions of Bishop Andrewes, which every minister, as I have said, should have at his elbow. And when we are tempted to think that we are too busy, we may remember that Andrewes himself, though one of the busiest of men, spent five hours a-day in devotion.

Let me say this also in passing: this stated exercise of daily prayer, why should it be in private only? Why should our churches be closed from Sunday to Sunday, with no opportunity even for the ministry of prayer? It was not so among us in the vigorous days that followed the Reformation, when for nearly a century "there was daily prayer morning and evening in all the principal churches in the country." Nor should it be so now. We are surely too hidebound and humdrum. We should try all methods and use every aid. There seems no good reason why, if a minister faithfully

¹ Law's Serious Call, cap. xxi.

exercises this part of his ministry, he should not fix the hour and let his people know, so that those who can may take advantage. It would be a help to the minister, and, as has been said, it would ensure the work being done.

But there is another mark of the true minister of no less importance: devotion, however sincere and intense, cannot and must not take the place of serious study. It is not with a view of depreciating the habit of prayer, of which I have spoken, but the very reverse, that I say this. Devotion without study is very likely to result in mere emotion. And it is true "that there is no soil in which" error is more luxuriantly developed. But it is also true that "in devotion so ordered as to bear upon the life the basis of other parts of religious training must be laid." We shall have to learn, as a wise writer has said, what in a few years will become a matter of experience—that "study is a religious work." I remember being greatly impressed by a passage in the Yale Lectures of Dr Dale, which I wrote down in the forefront of my commonplace-book and have returned to frequently when the interruptions of pastoral work seemed to make study impossible: "Gentlemen, you will be ruined, your own hopes and the hopes of your friends will all be blighted, unless you resolve with God's help to stand firm and to work

Need of
continuous
study.

as hard when you become a minister as you have worked while at the university."

I commend these words, for I am certain that there is no rock on which a man is more likely to come to grief than the relaxation of the habit of genuine study. No matter what our interruptions may be, we must find time for this also. Speaking out of the experience gained in parishes where the interruptions of pastoral work are probably as great as in any other sphere in the Church, one may say that the thing can to some extent be done. Indeed it must be done, or we shall be in large measure powerless for the ordinary work of the pulpit. It will often be far from easy, but we should endeavour to gain at least three hours daily for strenuous and definite study, and should aim at double that time. In the country as well as in the town we shall be beset by inconsiderate callers. In the country there will be other and perhaps more disturbing elements—the charm of the morning and the inconveniently conscientious feeling that a distant parishioner must be visited. We should scrutinise with care all such conscientious scruples, which are only too apt to square with our inclinations.

If a prayerless ministry is doomed to failure, no less is a ministry without study. It is hardly too strong a word which one has used on this matter,

that nothing but a matter of life and death should excuse any breaking into the hours set apart for study. One has heard some men say that study is "not much in their line," they have a turn for practical work! Let us not be deluded by these fallacies. A soldier might as well say that he has no turn for the study of tactics, or a doctor that he has no turn for studying his cases. What are we going to give our people in our wonderful "practical work"? Let us not suppose that even the years we have spent in preparation will suffice to equip us, and that we may then draw for ever upon our stores. No, our studies should begin anew when we turn to actual service, for then we can test them in life and bring them to immediate practical use. But if we cease to study we shall soon lose all that we now possess.

I do not require to point out the special necessity in the existing conditions in which we may be called to minister. We must be able to teach our people; we must know our own message in all its bearings, or we shall lose hold of thinking men. I do not know any words more to the point than those of the late Archbishop Benson: "Let our working clergy pass a quarter of a century more in their present relations to the 'educated class,' and then *pretiosa nostra vilescent*? As a caste they would necessarily still subsist, even invested for the devouter minds with some added touches of quasi-religious awe,

always received with the regard loyally rendered to diligence and benevolence. But even now, an ominous kindly silence too frequently closes a discussion begun in the presence of a clergyman. His character commands regard; he has credit for believing what his friends might equally accept, if the living speech of the teacher defended or even clearly stated his truth. But that habitual gentle silence, if it is not broken soon, means night or storm.”¹

Every minister who neglects study is responsible for this state of things. A pious ministry, no doubt, will always be honoured, but a learned ministry alone demands and commands attention. “Men have a right to expect,” says Canon Newbolt, “that while they are working in the fields that we may be fed, or working in the shops that we may enjoy the benefits of civilisation, or working with the brain that our property may be protected, our mind instructed, or our health preserved, we should be working to bring out from the treasury things new and old, to weigh the interests of men in the balance of the sanctuary, and put, if necessary, contemporary history under the fierce light of God’s truth.”²

It is obvious, then, that by study I do not mean merely what is called “reading for sermons,” which

¹ See Church Quarterly Review, July 1885.

² Speculum Sacerdotum, p. 45.

may be a most unprofitable form of intellectual dissipation. Of course it is necessary to go to the root of our text or passage, and to seek every help within our reach for that purpose, but beyond this we should fall back on the fruits of general study and observation of life. For in what I have said I am not forgetting that life itself must be our study, and the experiences of pastoral work will suggest many helpful thoughts. It is said of Sir Walter Scott, who had stored his mind by continuous study with the treasures which afterwards flowed freely from his magic pen, that when some one asked him to state the difference between himself and his imitators, he said, "They read to illustrate their writings, while I write to illustrate my reading." It is a very important distinction, and goes to the root of the whole matter.

The habit of "reading for sermons," and generally for that purpose reading chiefly other people's sermons, is, I am told, pretty common. It is greatly to be regretted. Sermons have their place, but not here. If the treatment be poor we gain little; if it be good we are hampered by it, and cannot get free. So that we shall be almost bound to take the divisions suggested or let the subject alone. This is specially true of sermons like those of Frederick Robertson, which are models in their way. But Frederick Robertson did not produce them by reading other men's sermons. They were

the fruit of deep study, of a thoroughly disciplined intellect, and an intense spirit which saw with clearness. These things are ordinarily the reward of hard work, and of hard work only. And when one sees, as is sometimes seen in manse where the stipend would admit of better things, a slender library—scarcely sensibly increased since college days except by a few volumes of “pulpit instructors” or ephemeral books of sermons and the inevitable row of annual reports, each marking another milestone in the progress of an unstudious ministry—one is at no loss to explain why the parish is deficient in spiritual vitality. “The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.”

I am not arguing on behalf of serious study with a view to our making our sermons learned or profound; it is rather that they may be intelligent and clear, coming from a mind always kept in tone because it is always in touch with some great master, and strenuously occupied. I do not know that any better sermons have been produced for the average congregation than the three posthumous volumes of village sermons by the late Dean Church, and they were the work of a man who spent some nineteen years of his life in one of the quietest of country parishes, faithfully doing the work of his charge but at the same time stirring up the gifts that were in him, which some day were to tell, as they have told, on a wider sphere.

The most futile of all things, perhaps, is to give advice as to study and books to be read. It should not be necessary to say to intending ministers—study the Bible; but it is a **Personal knowledge of the Bible.** first necessity. At the risk of repetition let me say this very strongly: it is one of the great defects of our training for the ministry that we do not really get to know the Bible. We study all round it, but do not sufficiently get into its real teaching. All our studies are helpful to elucidate its meaning, but we must get to the meaning and make it our own. “Dogma, history, evidences, morals, language, criticism, fathers, councils, liturgiology,”—all are helps and handmaids, but the truth itself is what we must reach. I am quite certain that we shall find no really great preacher, no preacher who permanently affected his generation, who did not possess a deep and wide knowledge of the Bible—a knowledge to which he was perpetually adding by daily study. The searching power of such sermons as those of Newman is due not to their charm of style, which is an added grace, but to this thorough knowledge of the Bible as well as of the human heart. If, therefore, it is to be a power in our work, we must not be detained too long in what has been well called “the brushwood of preliminary criticism.” For some called to the work this is a duty, and an important one, but not specially for the pastor called to

feed his people with the inner truths of religion and life.¹

Next to the continuous study of the Bible I shall only venture to make another suggestion. One main object of our study at first should be to fill

Gaps to be filled up in our reading. up those omissions—necessary omissions—in the regular curriculum. And among others I would mention the important subject of Christian ethics, on which till lately, apart from translations, we had no very satisfactory books in our own language. The want has recently been supplied to some extent by Smyth's Treatise in the International Library and Strong's Bampton Lectures, and by other smaller works. The importance of this study lies in the fact that it is really the connecting link between the abstract study of theology and the practical work of the ministry, in bringing the truths of spiritual revelation to bear on the consciences and lives of men. No ministry will ever be effective in which the ethical note is not dominant, for after all it is moral needs with which we have to deal. And though it be true that the preaching of a past generation may be accurately described as little else than dry morality, it is also true that the preaching which took its place was

¹ "The parson," says George Herbert, "is full of all knowledge. But the chief and top of his knowledge consists in the book of books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort, the Holy Scriptures."
—The Country Parson, cap. 4.

equally defective on the other side. While we are called to proclaim a message of divine love and the necessity of divine aid, and even to assert and vindicate the real efficacy of our Lord's presence in the Church and His action through His ordinances, we are bound to assert with equal clearness the purposes for which His grace is given, and which are fulfilled only in the fruits of good living. For this reason a sound knowledge of Christian ethics is absolutely necessary.

I have already indicated the importance to be attached to the history of worship, first in our own Church and in the Church universal—"a noble province," as it has been called, "of the kingdom of God." For all, the elements of such study will be helpful; and for those whose tastes and leisure would carry them further it will be found very fascinating, revealing important sides of the higher life of the Church.

A third subject of study may be suggested; no minister can afford to pass it by. I mean the great subject of sociology and economics, not for the purpose of preaching on such subjects, but again for mental discipline, and in order to take an intelligent view of the great questions moving men. The literature is boundless and easily accessible. I have ventured to make these suggestions because they cover ground which, in my own experience, I have found very necessary to be overtaken for a

more effective exercise of the ministry; and for the rest, I shall only repeat that next to our books, and even above our books, we are specially to study men.

Though recreation is very necessary, we shall do little real good in our parish if we show our people that we have time for amusements and no time for the real work of the cure. While we should identify ourselves as far as possible with the social life and amusements of our people, we should not only appear to be, but we should be, the hardest workers in the parish.

The next, and, as I take it, the supreme point in the ministry of life, is the cultivation of the pastoral spirit. Now the first note of the true pastor is disinterestedness. The whole fruit of our study and devotion should be to do our people good. If we may reverently apply the words, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."¹

The most beautiful thing about our work is just this, that it is a ministry of life, and that it is intended to touch, as far as may be with the blessing of Christ, every stage of the experience of the Christian soul. We are called to receive children in His name and to bless them from Him; to teach and train them in His way; to instruct and prepare the young in due

¹ St John, x. 11.

time to come to His table; to visit and comfort our people in sickness and sorrow; to rebuke and exhort them in sin; to bless them in the sacred union of marriage; to be with them as counsellors and guides in every stage of life; and to bring them help and consolation in dying. For such a work a further discipline is necessary beyond that of personal devotion and appropriate study. It is the cultivation of the spirit of the pastor, of the minister of Christ. And of this spirit, disinterestedness, as I have said, is surely the first mark. It is a high counsel, but we must learn it soon, or we shall be in some danger of not learning it at all. When we enter upon the work of the ministry we are to remember that it is not our own comfort or reputation for which we are first to seek. This quality of disinterestedness is the very core of the ministry of life, and will send its force into every other part of our service. Not for self-culture merely or the attainment of some ulterior object—as some higher and more notable sphere—but for the good of the people to whom we have been sent, should all our work be done. Self-seeking will poison the springs of our influence. And we must set ourselves, with all the energy of our being and with God's help, to crush this spirit within us. It is the cankerworm which ruins the pastoral life. It has been well said that disinterestedness can be "trained into an instinct which shrinks with unfeigned distress

from the shame and conscious degradation of self-seeking in holy things." And it is certain that this virtue is the central moral power of a true ministry. Always and in all circumstances to be seeking our people's highest good,—this is the true ideal of what we have called the ministry of life.

And this implies that we think of *all* our people. Many speak of work among the poor as if it were specially meritorious. God forbid that we should depreciate such work; but we shall sometimes find it necessary to remind ourselves of the wider scope of the ministry and the spiritual needs of every soul. When we speak of the poor as being our special work, we are not to forget that for the others also Christ died. Work among the poor is difficult; work among the rich and well-to-do is perhaps even more difficult,—I mean true spiritual work. Education and wealth do not mean the possession of the kingdom. And such people with whom we may have to deal are often much more under the power of mere conventionalism, and less in touch with the realities of life. It is all the more needful not to neglect them or to treat them only on a social footing, as if in matters of religion we might never speak seriously. Suitable opportunity will occur; and it should never be missed, as it will often be welcomed. This note of disinterestedness in the

**Duty to all
classes of
our people.**

pastoral life is indeed vital: we must make no distinctions. Wherever we can help souls, there we are wanted; there, as soldiers of Christ, we must be. If we have a turn for work among the young we must not neglect the old. At first we may find this work difficult. It will not be so difficult as it seems if we are in earnest, for if the people feel that we are trying to live near to God, and to bring God's message to them, it will not matter much to them whether we do so in stammering words—it will be the message of love. Every minister can tell of times when he has gone to the bedside of a sufferer, feeling powerless to comfort and soothe, and able to say nothing but a few broken words and to utter a poor imperfect prayer; and then he has gone out into the street wondering what there could be in what he had done to help a soul in the agony of pain and in the presence of death. Ashamed of our own helplessness, we have almost been tempted to think it was useless. Yet it seemed certainly to bring help and light and hope. And then we remembered that we were ambassadors of Christ. Though the message was delivered in poor and broken words it was His message. We were visible representatives of the boundless stores of grace and comfort which Christ has offered us in His Church. It was not our word, but His, that brought consolation.

The next note, as it seems to me, in the pastoral

spirit is truth. Truth is a vital secret in the ministry of life. We will never convince others unless we are convinced ourselves. Besides, it is truth our people will look for. And it is perhaps the most difficult thing to give them; because, though it is what they need and in the core of their being desire, it is not always what they wish. Yet if we are to be true ministers we must strive after it. We must not give forth an uncertain sound. Whatever we say we must mean to stand by. It is not merely views, opinions, speculations,—it is truth to live by and truth on which to die that people want from a real minister of God; and such truth can only come from a man who is himself true. Therefore, although it may seem to be an elementary virtue, I would earnestly plead for its cultivation. Believe me, it is more important than a great deal of the scholastic learning by which, especially at first, we set great store. Downright sincerity is worth whole waggon-loads of learning, when these are combined with mere formalism. Reality, not pretence, is a power with men. And perhaps where the ministry fails, more than anywhere else, is in the tendency to a mild professionalism which covers everything with a genteel cloak of respectability. The very idea of the ministry is abandoned when this is so. We must be true, or we cannot be the ministers of Him who is the

Truth. The scriptural precept, to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, is not easy to follow. Indeed I have observed, in my way through life, that the wisdom is frequently practised at the expense of the harmlessness, and while the serpent is much in evidence the dove is not so often seen.

Courage is another characteristic. By this I do not mean stubborn insistence on getting our own way; very often this is mere weakness. **Courage.** Courage may mean acquiescence in personal defeat for the time if we are confident of having truth on our side. (But we must remember that everybody has that consciousness more or less.) True courage is perhaps the rarest quality in the ministry. There is a good deal of outspokenness; there is not so much of real courage—the courage to speak, the courage to be silent, to abide calmly and wait the result. It is a virtue to be cultivated, and to be carefully distinguished from “bravado.”

Still more important is consistency; and this suggests patience with ourselves as well as with our people. It is seldom wise to attempt **Con-** to revolutionise the parish the moment we **sistency.** enter upon it, forgetting that we are not “the first that ever burst into that silent sea.” Perhaps we may want another revolution in an opposite direction within a year or two. It has been said, “consistency

is the bugbear of little minds." It may be so, but if it should be found in our ministry that we suit our views and actions to something lower than a sound reason, we will soon cease to exercise any real and abiding influence. There is no quality which men value more highly than consistency, and with justice, for it is the mark of a man of real purpose. It shows a life which is not a thing of shreds and patches, but a living whole; where there is no waste of strength, but a quiet persistency of purpose; in which there is always an element of power. Indeed in this quality lies one of the greatest forces in our ministerial life. Men who will not believe our message will be impressed by our fidelity to our own ideal, they will feel in their secret souls an awe in our presence. But let it be remembered what a wise man has said, that "Consistency is not to be achieved by a dramatic attempt to practise it. It cannot be compassed by throwing ourselves, in imagination, outside ourselves, and thinking how our lives will look in the social landscape and to the popular eye. Consistency is created from within; it is the product of direct simple homage to truth. Mountains of ignorance, mountains of prejudice, mountains of sin, mountains of self-sufficiency, mountains of unbelief—they would be removed easily and speedily if this grace of consistency, so freely granted to us by the divine spirit of our indulgent Master, so easily forfeited

by disloyalty to His voice and to His truth, were but more earnestly cherished by us, His ministers."¹

The ministry of life, then, what does it mean? It means that in prayer, in study, in character, in all our life, we must have only one desire—to fulfil the King's business. We are to bear a message from God. We are to be His ambassadors, and all our thoughts must be how to commend that message. Only by our life can we commend it. If our life contradicts it, if we live selfishly and yet preach well, is it not a reproach and a weakness? It has been said of some ministers that when in the pulpit one could wish them never to be out of it, and when out of it one could wish them never to be in. This means that life and ministry are divorced. It may often be so, but never with the true pastor. If we cherish the notes of the true ministry—disinterestedness, truth, courage, consistency—we can never fall into such a contradiction.

But let me speak still more plainly and earnestly. I have urged the cultivation of the pastoral spirit, and I have mentioned some of its characteristics. For the attainment of these Source
of minis-
terial
power. we shall be driven back on the true and ultimate source of ministerial power. The pastoral spirit can only be fostered by constant meditation

¹ Liddon, Clerical Life and Work, p. 165.

on the ministerial life of Him Who "went about doing good," Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and it is true to-day, as it always has been, that no man will really fulfil the office of the ministry who does not realise that with the call to undertake this service there comes also the promise and assurance of power adequate to the task. In the very earliest days of the Church's life, when the apostles—men of very ordinary intellectual gifts and of no social importance—looked forward with dismay to the work that lay before them, they were for a little sustained by the thought that their risen Lord intended by some supreme stroke to effect what seemed to them impossible, and to restore at once the kingdom to Israel. They were speedily disabused of this idea, and the truth was brought home to them that the work would be effected only by spiritual means; they would "receive power after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them."

History has abundantly shown that this peculiar gift of ministerial power has been continuously and fully bestowed at every period of the Church's life. Indeed it is the most obvious fact in Christian history. The ministry of the Church has exercised its abiding influence in the world by virtue of the spiritual power emanating from it, and by no other means. It is true that it has at times grasped and

True
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ministry.

used political power. Amid the decay of intellectual vigour, amid the slackening of morals, amid social disunion and disruption, this was perhaps inevitable. And when the Church was content to use this power for moral ends the ministry remained unsullied. The taint entered, as it always does, when such power was sought as a reward of worldly ambition. Not by such means, then nor now, are men really won to Christ. Nor has it been mainly by the gift of intellectual power that the true influence of the ministry has been exerted. It has been supremely by the gift of spiritual power which is offered to all, but especially to the ministers of God for the fulfilment of their work, and which is not only offered but bestowed on those who give themselves without reserve to this ministry of souls. So true is it, that "from the age of the apostles until now our Lord's work in the world has varied with the personal and spiritual elevation of us His representatives among men, to whom at the first He left, if we will, a legacy of moral power."

It is the presence of this power exhibiting itself in the graces of a consistent Christian character which is the spring and source of the pastoral spirit. In the long-run our work will stand or fall by our life. It is the character of the minister which, humanly speaking, gives all the power to the ministry; and failure here will be failure everywhere.

Wherever our lot may be cast—in the busy city

or the quiet moorland, in mining village or country town—we shall have the same temptations to meet, the temptation to shun the narrow and difficult path of a true servant of Christ. But we are not to be discouraged; it is character which tells.

In a remarkable passage in Mr Lecky's 'History of Morals,' which is too long to quote here, it is

Two aspects of the Church's life.

pointed out that in the history of the Church the sectarian animosities, the horrible persecutions, the blind hatred of progress, the ungenerous support of every galling disqualification and restraint, the intense class-selfishness, the obstinately protracted defence of intellectual and political superstition, the childish but whimsically ferocious quarrels about minute differences, stand out in bold relief; and by these the superficial observer judges the work of the Church, forgetting the other side of the picture—the clergyman in his parish; the simple, unostentatious unselfish zeal with which he educates the ignorant, guides the erring, comforts the sorrowing, braves the horrors of pestilence, and sheds a hallowing influence over the dying hour; the countless ways in which, in his little sphere, he allays evil passions, and softens manners, and elevates and purifies those around him.

The true Ideal.

It is this ideal which we are called, as far as possible, to realise in the work of the ministry. And we do well to remember that

personal character is the first and indispensable necessity. To contribute in any degree to a fuller realisation of the ideal of a Christian pastor is surely a noble and high ambition worthy of our earnest effort; to do, for instance, what Arnold did for the scholastic profession; to offer, at least in some department of our work, an example which shall be an inspiration and a power to others. What though the sphere in which it may be exercised may be outwardly small? In such work no sphere is really small, for it is the region of life in which we are called to labour, the region of spiritual influence. There is a high place in the Church's history for her great preachers and theologians, for her wise administrators and rulers. Upon these, perhaps, men look back with admiration, and their names are repeated with honour; but the true secret of the vitality of the faith has not lain entirely or even mainly with them. While controversies have raged and storms have broken over the Church, such names emerge and are remembered; but meanwhile the work is being quietly and faithfully done in thousands of lonely posts. From year to year, in patient persistence, the blessed gospel of God's love in Christ has been preached, the sweet and pure life of the true servant of God has been as far as possible exhibited, and a silent growing influence has been felt. So has it been in all ages. The Christian pastor, by the ministry of the Word

and the ministry of life, has brought the power of Christ to men, and thus the Church has lived. For this great work—there is no greater—we are waiting and preparing. It demands of us our very best—the strength and purity of a consecrated life, continuous and purposeful study, earnest and sincere devotion. Carried out in this spirit our ministry may fail of worldly acknowledgment, but it will attain what alone is worth having—the approval of our own conscience and the blessing of God, to whom one day we must render our account. Whatever is remembered or forgotten, let us not forget always to endeavour so to live and act that our people may feel they have not only been in the presence of their friend, but also of a true minister and steward of the mysteries of God.



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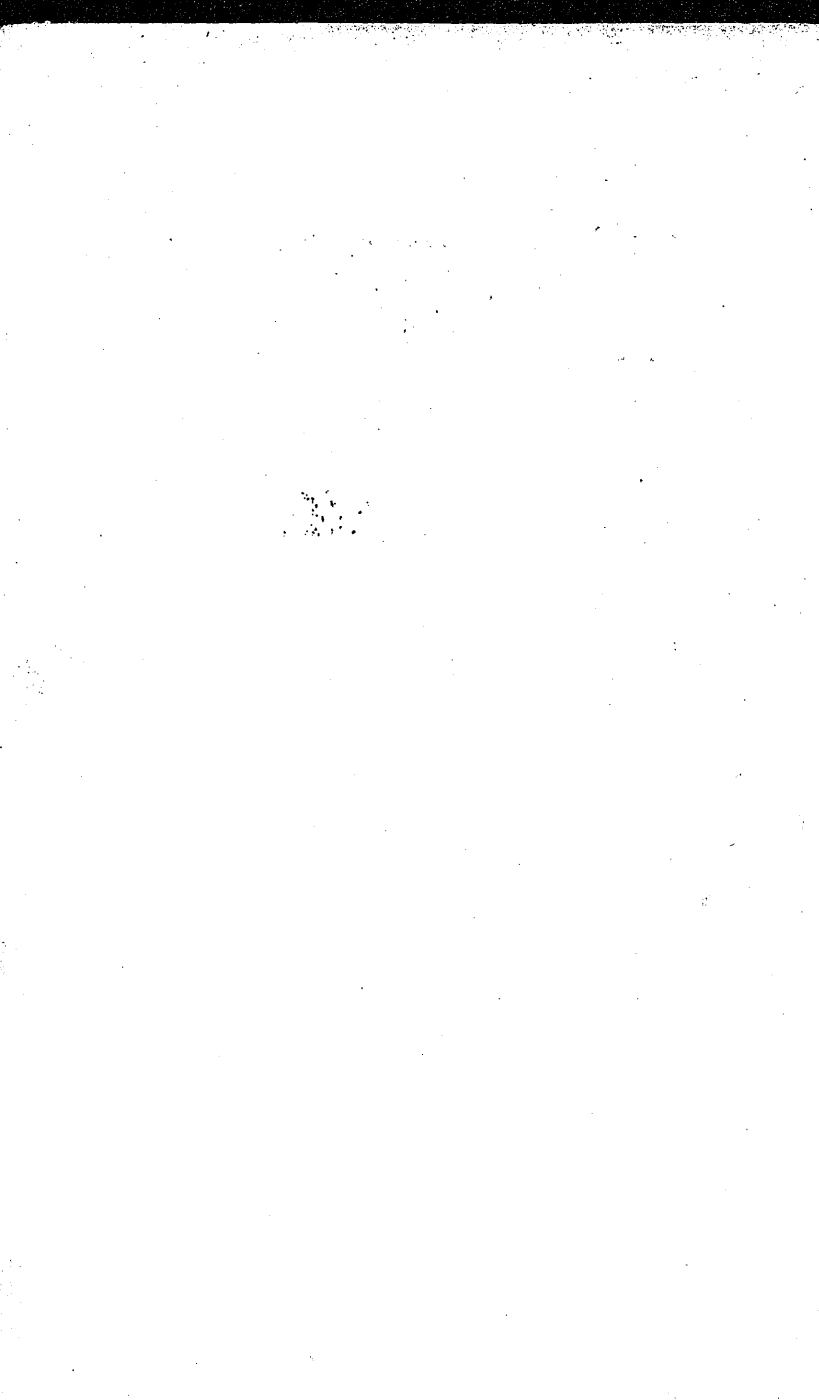
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